THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF KURDISH VOTING BEHAVIOR: THE CASE OF ISTANBUL'S BAĞCILAR DISTRICT

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2020

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF KURDISH VOTING BEHAVIOR: THE CASE OF ISTANBUL'S BAĞCILAR DISTRICT

Thesis submitted to the

Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Political Science and International Relations

by

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2020

The Political Economy of Kurdish Voting Behavior:

The Case of Istanbul's Bağcılar District

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ABSTRACT

The Political Economy of Kurdish Voting Behavior:

The Case of Istanbul's Bağcılar District

This dissertation examines Kurdish voting behavior and shifts the focus from identity politics to class-based cleavage. It analyzes the reasons behind the Kurdish political preferences between the HDP and AKP in Bağcılar and Istanbul. With its multi-research methodology both employing statistical methods and political ethnography, this dissertation argues that class divisions and socioeconomic differentiation among the Kurdish electorate significantly influence their voting behavior. The statistical analysis shows that as the income and education levels increase, Kurdish voters are more likely to support the HDP and less likely to support the AKP. The Kurdish poor and the most disadvantageous and precarious segments of Kurdish working-class support the AKP, whereas the relatively better-off Kurdish working class and/or upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments support the HDP. The fieldwork in Bağcılar shows that the AKP and the HDP use different types of linkages and articulations in mobilizing different Kurdish classes and class segments. Departing from the fieldwork, I argue that the AKP is a clientelistic machine-party addressing both redistribution and recognition matters for the Kurdish poor, whereas HDP is a contentious movement-party addressing grievances and relative deprivation of upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments.

ÖZET

Kürt Seçmen Davranışının Politik Ekonomisi:

İstanbul Bağcılar İlçesi Örneği

Bu tez, Kürt seçmen davranışını incelemektedir ve odak noktasını kimlik siyasetinden sınıf temelli bölünmelere kaydırmaktadır. İstanbul'da ve Bağcılar'da AKP ve HDP arasındaki Kürt siyasi tercihlerin ardındaki nedenler araştırılmaktadır. İstatistiksel metodlar ve politik etnografi üzerinden çoklu araştırma metolojisi kullananan bu tez, Kürt seçmenler arasındaki sınıfsal ayrışmaların ve sosyoekonomik farklılaşmaların, oy verme davranışını önemli ölçüde etkilediğini öne sürmektedir. İstatistiksel analiz, gelir ve eğitim seviyeleri arttıkça, Kürt seçmenlerin daha yüksek olasılıkla HDP'yi ve daha düşük olasılıkla AKP'yi destekledikleri göstermektedir. Kürt yoksulları ve Kürt işçi sınıfının en dezavantajlı ve güvencesiz kesimleri AKP'yi desteklerken, Kürt işçi sınıfının nispeten daha iyi durumda olanları ve/veya sınıfsal hiyerarşide yükselen Kürt kesimler HDP'yi desteklemektedir. Bağcılar'daki saha çalışması, AKP ve HDP'nin farklı Kürt sınıflarını ve sınıfsal kesimlerini harekete geçirmek için farklı türden bağlantılar ve artikülasyonlar kullandığını göstermektedir. Saha çalışmasından hareketle, AKP'nin hem yeniden dağıtım hem de tanıma yolluyla Kürt yoksullara hitap eden klientelistik bir makine partisi olduğunu, HDP'nin ise yükselen Kürt kesimlerin mağduriyetine ve göreceli yoksunluğuna hitap eden bir mücadeceli hareket partisi olduğunu iddia ediyorum.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis advisor, Zeynep Kadirbeyoğlu, for her guidance and patience. She always believed in me. I am greatly indebted to my jury members, Erdem Yörük and Mert Arslanalp, who read earlier drafts of this thesis and offered their constructive criticisms. Thanks to Erdem's encouragement, I started statistical analysis and modelling. Mert's suggestion on the analytical framework of this thesis is invaluable for me. I also would like to thank Bülent Küçük and Alpkan Birelma for their valuable comments.

In addition, I am very thankful to my colleagues, Fatih Kazancı and Emre Özer. They covered me while I was writing the thesis and encouraged me during the times of depression. Moreover, I am also grateful for having a great friend and "thesis-buddy," Mehmet Baki Deniz. Furthermore, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my Kurdish friends and fellows in Bağcılar.

I would like to thank my dear wife, Aslı, and my beloved parents, Mehmet Ali and Saime, for their continuous support and patience during the writing process.

Last but not least, I am very grateful to the KONDA research company for allowing me to use their datasets and TÜBİTAK for providing generous financial support. Especially, I am very thankful to the officials' of TÜBİTAK BİDEB programs for their patience and kind correspondence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....1
1.1 The research questions..... 1
1.2. The research puzzle 4
1.2 Dependent and independent variables 7
1.3 Challenging existing explanations in the literature 7
1.4 Hypothesis and analytical framework 12
1.5 Methodology: statistical and ethnographic methods 18
1.6 The case of Kurdish voters in Istanbul 23
1.7 The case of Bağcılar 31
1.8 The organization of the dissertation 42
CHAPTER 2: THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY BUILDING 44
2.1 Introduction.....44
2.2. Cleavage voting.....46
2.3 Voting behavior in Turkey.....53
2.4 Kurdish voting behavior 63
2.5 Parties, linkages and articulations 80
2.6 The machine party literature 83
2.7 The clientelistic-machine party, AKP, in Turkey 97
2.8 The movement party literature.....105
2.9 The contentious-movement party, HDP, in Turkey 117
2.10 Conclusion 129
CHAPTER 3: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ON THE KURDISH POPULATION IN BAĞCILAR AND ISTANBUL 133
3.1 Introduction.....133
3.2 Descriptive statistics on the Kurdish sample of Istanbul.....134
3.3 Descriptive statistics on the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar 153

3.4 Conclusion 168
CHAPTER 4: KURDISH VOTING BEHAVIOR IN ISTANBUL AND BAĞCILAR 170
4.1 Introduction 170
4.2 Logistic regression on the Kurdish sample of Istanbul 173
4.3 Logistic regression results on the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar 184
4.4 Conclusion 190
CHAPTER 5: UNDERSTANDING VOTING BEHAVIOR IN BAĞCILAR: THE AKP AND PRO-AKP KURDS 196
5.1 Introduction 196
5. 2 Resource mobilization 203
5.3 Space-making 240
5.4 Identity and cultural frames 255
5.5 Conclusion 279
CHAPTER 6: UNDERSTANDING VOTING BEHAVIOR IN BAĞCILAR: THE HDP AND PRO-HDP KURDS 281
6.1 Introduction 281
6.2 Identity and cultural frames 286
6.3 Space-making 303
6.4 Resource mobilization 325
6.5 Conclusion 371
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION 375
7.1 Summary of main findings 375
7.2 Contributions and directions for future research 389
7.3 Broader theoretical implications 392
APPENDIX A: ELECTION RESULTS 394
APPENDIX B: BRIEF CHRONOLOGY 396
APPENDIX C: SUMMARY STATISTICS 398
APPENDIX D: INSRUMENTAL VARIABLE ESTIMATION: ISTANBUL 399

APPENDIX E: INSTRUMENTAL VARIABLE ESTIMATION: BAĞCILAR 400
APPENDIX F: SPECIAL REGRESSION ESTIMATION FOR ISTANBUL 401
APPENDIX G: HAUSMAN TEST FOR ISTANBUL ESTIMATION.....402
APPENDIX H: ORIGINAL REGRESSION MODEL WITH TIME DUMMY 404
APPENDIX I: POSTERS FROM THE BAĞCILAR SQUARE 405
APPENDIX J: EXAMPLES OF *APARTKONDU*.....406
APPENDIX K: REGRESSION ON THE ISTANBUL KURDISH SAMPLE: 2010-2018.....407
REFERENCES 408

ABBREVATIONS

AKP	Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*)
ANAP	Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*)
BDP	Peace and Democracy Party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*)
CHP	Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*)
DBP	Democratic Regions Party (*Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi*)
DEP	Democracy Party (*Demokrasi Partisi*)
DEHAP	Democratic People's Party (*Demokratik Halk Partisi*)
DİAYDER	Association of Islamic Scholars in Istanbul (*İstanbul Din Alimleri Derneği*)
DİK	Democratic Islam Congress (*Demokratik İslam Kongresi*)
DİSK	Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions in Turkey (*Türkiye Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfedarasyonu*)
DP	Democrat Party (*Demokrat Parti*)
DTP	Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi*)
DYP	True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*)
EMEP	Labor Party (*Emek Partisi*)
ESP	Socialist Party for the Oppressed (*Ezilenlerin Sosyalist Partisi*)
FP	Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*)
HADEP	People's Democracy Party (*Halkın Demokrasi Partisi*)
HDP	People's Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*)
HEP	People's Labor Party (*Halkın Emek Partisi*)
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi)
MSP	National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi*)
ÖZDEP	Freedom and Democracy Party (*Özgürlük ve Demokrasi Partisi*)
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan*)
PJ	Justicialist Party (Peronist Party in Argentina)
SHP	Socialdemocrat People's Party (*Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti*)
SP	Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*)

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Outline of the Fieldwork: Organizational Linkages and Political Articulations……15

Table 2. Bağcılar's Population……33

Table 3. Birthplaces of the Bağcılar Residents……..……34

Table 4. Registered Industrial Facilities in Bağcılar (1950-Today) …….…….……37

Table 5. Election Results in Bağcılar…….40

Table 6. Pro-Kurdish Parties from Past to Present…….……63

Table 7. Organizational Linkages and Political Articulations of Different Types of Parties……..81

Table 8. Income Groups among the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in Istanbul 144

Table 9. Occupations in the Kurdish Sample…….……..….147

Table 10. Occupational Status of the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in Istanbul….149

Table 11. Gender in the Kurdish Sample of Bağcılar……...…155

Table 12. Religiosity Levels in the Kurdish Sample of Bağcılar….……...……157

Table 13. Occupational Status in the Kurdish Sample of Bağcılar……...……160

Table 14. Occupational Status of the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in Bağcılar.....161

Table 15. Types and Characteristics of the Variables……..…….……172

Table 16. Results of the Logistic Regression Estimation on the Istanbul Sample……...174

Table 17. Ologit Estimation on the Financial Capability….……182

Table 18. Instrumental Variable Estimation…….…183

Table 19. Results of the Logistic Regression Estimation on the Bağcılar Sample……...186

Table 20. Rerunning the Logistic Regression Without Clustering……..……....188

Table 21. Likelihoods of Kurdish Voting……...…….……194

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Analytical framework of the dissertation…….…….…….….14

Figure 2. The map of Bağcılar – Google Maps…….…….32

Figure 3. The map of Bağcılar neighborhoods……...…35

Figure 4. The reasons behind the settlement in the district…….38

Figure 5. Neighborhood results of the 2014 presidential elections in Bağcılar…….42

Figure 6. Neighborhood results of the 2014 general elections in Bağcılar…….42

Figure 7. Class Structure of Turks and Kurds in the metropolises…….68

Figure 8. Kurdish political preferences in the Istanbul sample……136

Figure 9. Age distribution in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul……...137

Figure 10. Religiosity patterns in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul…..……138

Figure 11. Household sizes in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul…….139

Figure 12. Economic classes in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul…….……141

Figure 13. Household income distribution in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul…….142

Figure 14. Income distribution in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul……...143

Figure 15. Economic classes of the AKP and the HDP Kurds in Istanbul……...144

Figure 16. Educational status in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul…….145

Figure 17. Educational status of the AKP and the HDP Kurds in Istanbul…...…...146

Figure 18. Financial capability of Turks and Kurds in the Istanbul sample…….151

Figure 19. Financial capability of the AKP and the HDP Kurds in Istanbul……...152

Figure 20. Spatial distribution of Kurds over the Bağcılar neighborhoods…….154

Figure 21. Age distribution in the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar……155

Figure 22. Household sizes in the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar……156

Figure 23. Household sizes of the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in Bağcılar…....157

Figure 24. Religiosity levels of the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in Bağcılar…...158

Figure 25. Education levels of the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in Bağcılar…….159

Figure 26. Household income distribution based on the KONDA's categories…...163

Figure 27. Household income distribution based on the author's own categories...164

Figure 28. Household incomes of the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in Bağcılar....165

Figure 29. Financial capability in the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar…...……...166

Figure 30. Financial capability of the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in Bağcılar…167

Figure 31. Twitter post of the Gönül Bağı (1)….…….226

Figure 32. Twitter post of the Gönül Bağı (2)…….226

Figure 33. Twitter post of the Gönül Bağı (3)……..227

Figure 34. Posters of Islamic talks in the Bağcılar's main square……....405

Figure 35. Poster promoting urban transformation in Bağcılar……405

Figure 36. An example of *apartkondu* (1)...……...……..406

Figure 37. An example of *apartkondu* (2)……...……406

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The research questions

Regarding the recent elections in Turkey, many commentators in academia and media claimed that the Kurdish voters would have determined "the fate" of the country (Kirişçi & Cengiz, 2015; Aydıntaşbaş, 2017; Cupolo, 2018; Bilginsoy, 2019; Rudaw, 2019). The Kurdish voting behavior has become significant in the determination of both the general and the local election results in the last decades. Likewise, the significance of Kurdish votes in Istanbul has increased exponentially with the massive Kurdish immigration into the city since the early 1990s. The forced migration policy, which had displaced millions of Kurdish citizens in the eastern and south-eastern provinces in the 1990s, and the subsequent Kurdish migration waves in the 2000s did not only transform the ethnic and demographic composition, but also class structure and political preferences in Istanbul. In this period, Istanbul turned into the largest Kurdish city in the world (Keyder, 2004). As of 2008, the KONDA research company estimated that approximately 1.9 million Kurdish people live in Istanbul (Pultar, 2008). Based on the KONDA survey and TUIK address-based census, it is estimated that Istanbul's Kurdish population was at least 2.3 million people in 2018. Considering this figure, one could easily recognize that today the Kurdish voting behavior in Istanbul becomes much more critical than before. Despite this fact, there is no sufficient attention in the current literature on Kurdish voting behavior in Istanbul, which is therefore a fresh and dynamic area of study.

It is generally known that two political parties –the AKP and the HDP– are dominant among the Kurdish electorate in Turkey (Yeğen, Tol & Çalışkan, 2016). While the AKP has maintained its electoral hegemony through a series of

authoritarian-populist measures, the HDP has become the second-opposition party in the parliament with more than 6 million votes (on the national level) in the latest elections. It is the first time in the history of modern Turkey that a "pro-Kurdish" party received such massive support. Although the pro-Kurdish parties (i.e. BDP and HDP) have been able to increase their votes in the consecutive elections of the 2000s and the 2010s, it is the AKP that receives most votes from the Kurdish electorate in Istanbul.

During this period, studies examining the Kurdish votes in the Turkish media and academia, exclusively focused on identity politics (Köse, 2015). The most conventional argument is that the secularly-oriented (or at least, less religious) Kurdish electorate support the HDP because of their former grievances and ethnonationalism, whereas the conservative Kurdish segments (either in traditional or religious terms) support the AKP because of the Islamic values (Sarıgil & Fazlıoğlu, 2013). However, in this dissertation, I argue that this type of conventional arguments cannot explain Kurdish voting behavior and a more nuanced analysis is necessary. Departing from this point, my primary research question in this dissertation is why some Kurds vote for the AKP, while others vote for the HDP in Istanbul.

While most studies in the existing literature exclusively focus on the influence of ethno-national and religious identities, they neglect or underestimate the class dimension. This dissertation argues that "class matters" in the formation of Kurdish political preferences in Istanbul. There are only a few studies addressing the socioeconomic status of the Kurdish voters of the AKP and the HDP and, in these studies, there are contesting arguments. In a survey study in the Kurdish-populated eastern and southeastern provinces, Yeğen et al. (2016) find that the Kurdish poor predominantly support the HDP, whereas the Kurdish middle- and upper-classes

mostly support the AKP. However, Küçük (2018) and Koçal (2017, 2018) suggest that the emerging Kurdish middle class has become one of the main constituents of the HDP in Diyarbakır. In a recent ethnographic study, Küçük (2019) shows the different political orientations vis-à-vis the "diversified social and symbolic inequalities within the Kurdish society" in Diyarbakır (p. 2). Likewise, in the case of Istanbul, while some commentators argue that the Kurdish poor and working class ("informal proletariat") support the HDP, others put forward that the most destitute segments of the Kurdish poor predominantly support the AKP in the urban peripheries (Yörük, 2013; Arıkan Akdağ, 2014; Müftüoğlu, 2014; Ark-Yıldırım, 2017). Therefore, it is necessary to empirically investigate the socioeconomic status of Kurdish voters. Following this debate, my second research question is which Kurdish classes or class segments support the AKP or the HDP in Istanbul.

However, in this dissertation, I suggest that only explaining why some Kurds vote for AKP and HDP is not sufficient. One needs to explain through which mechanisms the political parties mobilize their electorate and maintain their support. In the current literature, especially in tha case of Kurdish voting, there is limited attention to the political parties' mobilization strategies, practices, resources, intermediaries, networks and frames on the ground. With the exception of a few recent studies that address how the political parties garner support from the Kurdish voters at the local level, there is a lacuna of in-depth case studies in the existing literature on Kurdish studies (Arıkan Akdağ, 2014; Ark-Yıldırım, 2017; Yıldırım, 2017). Therefore, I propose to investigate the organizational linkages and political articulations[1] of the AKP and the HDP in mobilizing the different classes and/or

[1] Although it will be discussed in detail later, at this point, it is necessary to underline that the organizational linkages denote the appeals and connections that political parties make use of to garner electoral support, whereas the political articulations denote discourses and practices of the parties that construct (social) cleavages for establishing electoral hegemony. Leon et al. (2009) defines political

class segments within the Kurdish electorate in Istanbul. Therefore, I examine how (and through which mechanisms) the AKP and the HDP mobilize different classes and class segments of the Kurdish electorate in Istanbul.

1.2. The research puzzle:

The empirical puzzle that motivates this dissertation is the following: Despite having similar ethnic identity and background stories (involving exposure to violence, injustices, migration and discrimination), why do some Kurds vote for the AKP while others vote for the HDP? Is this difference only about the ethnonational consciousness, religious values and/or identity-ideological issues as the current literature assume? In contrast to the prevailing explanations, I find that the class-based (socioeconomic) variables significantly influence the Kurdish political preferences between the AKP and the HDP in the urban context.

Following the Marxist tradition (in political sociology), one might argue that the Kurdish poor and working-class should vote for the "leftist" HDP, whereas the Kurdish middle-class vote for the "rightist" AKP.[2] However, based on the analysis of actual Kurdish voting patterns in Istanbul and Bağcılar, I find that the Kurdish poor and lower echelons of Kurdish working-class do not support the leftist and radical democratic HDP but vote for the rightist-Islamist AKP in the peripheries of Istanbul. In contrast, it is the relatively better-off segments of the Kurdish working-class,

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articulation "as the process through which party practices naturalize class, ethnic and racial formations as a basis of social division by integrating disparate interests and identities into coherent social blocks" (p. 200). From this perspective, parties do not only reflect cleavages, they are also "decisive articulation agents," as they attempt to produce active consent and legitimate their domination among electorate. (Leon et al., 2009, p. 199).

[2] The Marxist tradition has assumed that the working-class vote for the left-wing parties and the middle-class vote for the right-wing parties. "Classical texts in political sociology saw elections as the expression of 'the democratic class struggle' that substituted, at least in the short term, for a class-based revolution. The Marxist agenda led to a focus on class voting between just two classes, the working and the middle, and their representatives, the parties of the left and right" (Evans, 2017, p. 181).

along with a small group of emerging Kurdish middle-class, who support the leftist HDP in the city.[3]

With regard to AKP's mobilization of the poor, there are some recent studies in the existing literature that indirectly address this puzzle through such conceptualizations as "neoliberal populism" (Bozkurt, 2013; Akçay, 2018), "social neoliberalism," (Dorlach, 2018), "Islamic populism" (Hadiz, 2014), "nativist or civilizational populism" (Arat-Koç, 2018). Although such concepts explain the AKP's support from the Turkish as well as the Kurdish poor in Istanbul to some extent, they do not thoroughly reflect my ethnographic findings in Bağcılar, Istanbul. Moreover, there is an insufficient attention on the HDP's mobilization of upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments except for some recent studies referring to the appeals of "democratic autonomy" (Küçük, 2019), "agonistic politics" (Tekdemir, 2016) and "left populism" (Kaya, 2019).[4]

Through my statisticaly and ethnographic findings, I argue that the AKP mobilizes the Kurdish poor through its clientelistic-machine politics, whereas the HDP mobilizes the upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments through contentious-movement politics. At the local level, the AKP functions like a huge political machine, which not only provides material inducements but also operates though "relational clientelism" with "locally-embedded brokers" and their "problem-solving networks" for the Kurdish poor (Auyero, 2001; Nichter, 2018). Besides the material exchanges, the AKP brokers and intermediaries establish strong intimate ties with the Kurdish poor. AKP brokers and intermediaries facilitate the "symbolic and affective identification" of the poor Kurdish voters (Küçük & Türkmen, 2020, p. 5). In its

[3] This small group of emerging Kurdish middle-class consists of young and educated Kurdish professionals, Kurdish shopkeepers, tradesmen, and businessmen.
[4] From now on I prefer to use "upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments" to define the advantegous and/or more skilled Kurdish working class as well as the small group of emerging Kurdish middle-class.

grassroots clientelistic mobilization, along with the party brokers, Islamic community and *tariqat* networks also play a vital role.[5] Nonetheless, as a secondary factor, the AKP's political machine is also supported by religious discourses and fueled by antagonistic frames (anti-secularism and anti-elitism). At the local level, the HDP performs as a contentious "movement party" (Kitschelt, 2006), which rests upon the deep-rooted mobilization of the Kurdish movement the (historical) repertoires of Kurdish resistance. The HDP taps into and represents grievances and relative deprivation of Kurdish people, especially of those upwardly-mobile segments.

In explaining different Kurdish voting patterns regarding these two frameworks, I argue that the material needs, expectations and aspirations of the Kurdish poor make them more exposed to the clientelistic appeals of the machine party, whereas the upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments with their relatively better class prospects are more autonomous in their political decisions and thus they have higher chances of supporting the contentious movement party. Besides, the condition of relative deprivation (along with former communal grievances) makes the case of upwardly-mobile Kurds' supporting the HDP more understandable.

The rest of this chapter is organized as follows: First, I discuss dependent and independent variables. Second, I depict the main outlines of the existing literature and rule out the conventional explanations. Third, I put forward the hypotheses and analytical framework. Fourth, I discuss the methodology. Finally, I introduce the cases and the field.

[5] Islamic communities are groups of believers united around the common religious ideas and values. The members of Islamic communities adhere to the charismatic leader. Some famous Islamic communities in Turkey are *Nurcus*, *Gülenists*, *Süleymanists* and the Adnan Oktar group. It is necessary to underscore that while Islamic communities (cemaats) are contemporary "imagined communities," the tariqats are deeply rooted in the *Naqshibendi* tradition. Some famous tariqats in Turkey are Iskenderpaşa, Erenköy, Ismailağa and Menzil.

1.2 Dependent and independent variables

In the first part of this dissertation, I estimate how and to what extent the class variables impact Kurdish voting behavior. In estimating the influence of class factors, I use regression analysis, as it is best way to control the influence of other variables. The dependent variable is the party preference of Kurdish voters in general elections and presidential elections. The independent variables are income, education and financial capability. The control variables are age, gender, religiosity and household size.

Dependent variable:	Kurdish vote for the AKP and HDP (AKP=0, HDP=1)
Explanatory variables:	Income, education and financial capability
Control variables:	Age, gender, religiosity and household size

In the second part, through an ethnographic study in Bağcılar, I explain the mechanisms that AKP and HDP use in mobilizing the support of Kurdish voters. I argue that through their disparate resources, identity and cultural frames, and space-making, AKP and HDP manage to reach differing socio-economic groups in Bağcılar.

1.3 Challenging existing explanations in the literature

This dissertation is the first comparative study that focuses on the Kurdish political preferences (for the AKP and the HDP) in Istanbul from a class-based perspective. Although there are a lot of macro-studies on "the Kurdish issue" in Turkey,[6] there is scarce literature on the formation of different political mobilizations and voting patterns among the Kurdish electorate.

[6] There are remarkable differences in the terminology: "Kurdish question", "Kurdish issue," "Kurdish problem." For some examples, see Gunter (1988), Yeğen (1999), Barkey (2000), Bozarslan (2001).

Most studies in the existing literature take "the Kurds" as a granted category and treat "Kurdish people" as a homogenous unit in the analysis. However, it is known that those individuals who are considered as "Kurdish" by the proxies of birthplace and geographical origin might not be defining themselves as ethnically or politically Kurdish.[7] There are various modalities of Kurdishness in terms of ethnicity, language, geography and political identity. For instance, in a recent study, Çiçek (2017) makes distinctions between the Kurdish nationalists, Kurdish conservatives, and Kurdish liberal-elites in the urban context. Besides, it is necessary to keep in mind that neither all ethnic Kurds are "politically Kurdish," nor all political Kurds are "geographically Kurdish" (e.g., second-generation Kurds born in Istanbul).[8] In parallel, there is not a single homogenous "Kurdish community" in Istanbul or any other specific locality. There are diverse Kurdish communities that are "structured by connections linked to geographical origins, political affiliation, and allegiance to particular congregations and brotherhoods" (Perouse, 2016). Moreover, some popular accounts, especially, among the Turkish media treat "the Kurdish voters" as a homogenous whole and exclusively focus on the Kurdish votes for the pro-Kurdish parties (such as BDP or HDP). This reductionist view neglects the Kurdish voters who support the rightist-Islamist parties.[9]

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[7] Romano (2006) make distinctions between four modalities of Kurdishness: "those who lie structurally outside the ethnic group category (they can never identify with the ethnic group in question); those who may be within the ethnic category, but who do not identify themselves ethnically; those who consider themselves part of the ethnic group, but in a nonpoliticized way (they do not make claims on the state based on their ethnicity); those whose ethnic identity is politicized (ethnic difference is seen as a legitimate basis for making political demands, ranging from group cultural, linguistic, and educational rights, to autonomy and separatism, ethnic nationalism)" (p. 100).

[8] "Politically Kurdish" connotes those Kurds who embrace the ethnonational identity. "Geographically Kurdish" –*Kürdistanlı*– refers to those Kurds who primarily define themselves with the territory that is historically known as "Kurdistan." For further discussion, see, Perouse (2016).

[9] Perouse argues that "[t]here is no 'Kurdish vote' as such but differentiated votes according to the statuses of the people concerned and the many networks they belong to. Most 'geographic' Kurds support parties other than those derived from the Kurdish movement. And many mayors from the AKP of the 39 districts in Istanbul are geographic and ethnic Kurds. […] Besides, along the years, thanks to integration and assimilation mechanisms as well as the politics of overture carried out since the end of the 1980s, the first waves of [Kurdish] immigration have now merged into the Istanbulite melting-pot.

The conventional explanations in the existing literature do not only ignore different political mobilizations but also the socioeconomic status and class segments among the Kurdish electorate. It is necessary to underscore that there is not a single "Kurdish vote" in Istanbul, but "a gamut of voting patterns according to the status of constituents and their varied networks of allegiance" (Perouse, 2016). By drawing attention to the two political mobilizations among the Kurdish electorate (pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurdish voters) in Istanbul, first and foremost I attempt to deconstruct the reductionist view on the homogeneity of the Kurdish electorate. Besides, instead of using proxies to define Kurdishness and "Kurdish vote," I use voters' self-designation of Kurdishness –in response to "what is your ethnic identity" question– and self-declaration of their votes –in response to "which party do you vote for" question. This research shows that Kurds are not a homogenous population in terms of political identity and affiliation, class or socioeconomic status, religiosity and religious networks.

As mentioned previously, there are a few recent quantitative studies that investigate the Kurdish voting behavior in Turkey, in which mainly the influence of ethnicity, religiosity, income, and education are tested through statistical modeling at the national scale (Sarıgil, 2010; Ekmekçi, 2011; Bilecen, 2015). However, there is no specific quantitative study on the case of the Kurdish electorate in Istanbul. My quantitative analysis of Kurdish voting in Istanbul and Bağcılar aims to fill this vacuum. Besides, there are a few recent ethnographic studies addressing the Kurdish electorate of the AKP and the HDP separately in Istanbul, but they do not

Social promotion through education, integration into the urban economy and the political parties – primarily the AKP since 2002 – have helped rid geographic and ethnic Kurds of the peculiarities previously attached to them. That tagged-on peculiarity was replaced by an acknowledged and vindicated singularity. In many ways, Istanbul has been an important laboratory in the process of positive identity affirmation of Kurds in Turkey" (Perouse, 2016).

systematically compare these two groups in the urban context. Designed as a comparative case study, the field work in Bağcılar, which is presented in Chapters 5 and 6, compares different political mobilizations among Kurdish electorate in Istanbul.

As stated earlier, this dissertation differs from the previous studies in the literature by shifting the theoretical focus from identity-based cleavages to class-based cleavages. The identity politics perspective that dominated the academia in Turkey in the 1990s and early 2000s explained the rise of the AKP over the contestations between Kemalist-secular elites and religious-conservative masses, via the center vs. periphery cleavage (Turam, 2007). In parallel, the previous studies on "the Kurdish issue" exclusively focused on ethnicity, language, nationalism, and ideology parameters and underestimated the materialist explanations and the impact of political economy on the reconfiguration of the Kurdish political preferences in the new urban setting. My research opts for the materialist perspective and proposes to examine the class-based determinants of the Kurdish voting behavior in Istanbul.

Last but not least, there are a few qualitative studies in Turkey that investigate the organizational linkages and political articulations of parties among the Kurdish voters from a micro perspective (Arıkan Akdağ, 2015; Ark-Yıldırım, 2017; Günay, 2019; Günay & Yörük, 2019). In these studies, several factors are cited in the AKP's successful mobilization among Kurdish electorate: Islamic brotherhood, Islamic community and *tariqat* networks, co-ethnic entrepreneurs and brokers, expansion of welfare state and social assistance programs, and lastly clientelist relations. In addition, there are some recent studies on neoliberal, rightist and/or Islamic populism of the AKP that stress the symbolic and ideological resources of the party and "personalistic ties" and "affective identification" established between the poor voters

and the party's leader Erdoğan through anti-establishment/anti-elitist frames (Bozkurt, 2013, Küçük & Türkmen, 2020). In contrast to these arguments on symbolic dimension, I argue that the AKP's mobilizational power comes from direct material exchanges as well as locally-embedded brokers and intermediaries, who maintain grassroots machines and relational clientelism. As a primary contribution, this dissertation shows the political intermediation between the party and voters.

Different from the previous studies, in discussing the linkages and articulations of the parties, I argue that political parties not only reflect socio-economic (class-based) cleavages but they also actively construct and articulate them on the ground. I contend that the cleavages do not necessarily exist before the political parties, instead political parties to some extent have the power to shape and reconstruct cleavages, especially the socio-economic ones. In discussing populist "logic" in politics, Laclau argues that political actors create "people" out of diffuse groups and subjects, and shape political divisions among society through rhetorical means (Jager & Boriello, 2020). Therefore, political cleavages are not frozen entities; we need to discuss the relationships between cleavages, linkages and articulations in a dynamic way. Departing from this discussion, this dissertation investigates through which discourses, frameworks, resources, networks, and intermediary mechanisms the AKP and the HDP address and mobilize particular Kurdish classes or class segments, how these two parties actively construct consent among the Kurdish electorate and reshape class-based cleavages among them, and how they reproduce, distort or deconstruct existing or potential class cleavages in mobilizing Kurdish electorate.

1.4 Hypothesis and analytical framework

The first part involves statistical modeling on the influence of class-based cleavages on Kurdish voting, and the second part involves ethnographic work on the linkages and articulations of AKP and HDP among the Kurdish electorate. My primary research question is whether the class-based cleavage significantly influences Kurdish voting behavior or not. Therefore, the first hypothesis is as follows:

> H_1: Class-based factors significantly influence the Kurdish political preferences between the AKP and the HDP.[10]

In response to this hypothesis, through my statistical and ethnographic findings, I argue that the Kurdish poor and lower echelons of the Kurdish working-class support the AKP, and upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments (relatively better-off Kurdish working-class along with a small group of emerging Kurdish middle-class) support the HDP in Istanbul. Having found a significant impact of class positions, I propose to look at the articulation of class cleavages and active reproduction of consent among particular Kurdish classes/segments on the ground. Therefore, the second research question is as follows: What are the mechanisms through which the rightist AKP mobilizes the Kurdish poor and lower echelons of working-class, whereas the leftist HDP mobilizes the upwardly-mobile Kurdish groups in Istanbul?

I argue that the AKP's clientelistic exchanges lie beyond the short-sighted conventional clientelism in the form of "electoral hand-outs" or "vote-buying." AKP's machine type of clientelism is maintained by co-ethnic local brokers and intermediaries, and reproduced through problem-solving networks, and supported by the secondary dynamics, such as Islamist identity of the party, Islamic values, Islamic communities and *tariqats* that provide moral and material support. These

[10] The null hypothesis (H_0) is that there is no influence of class factors on Kurdish political preferences.

characteristics indeed make the AKP a full-fledged machine party. Therefore, by looking at the case of Bağcılar, I argue that what the AKP achieves at the local level is made possible by "relational clientelism" (Nichter, 2018).

On the other hand, the upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments (relatively better-off Kurdish working class and emerging Kurdish middle-class) are able to support the contentious movement-party (i.e. HDP) thanks to their better economic conditions, which provide partial autonomy. In addition, the upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments' communal grievances in past and perception of injustices (i.e. relative deprivation) in present channel them towards the HDP. Along with the previous grievances, their feeling and experience of relative deprivation –based on the comparison of the self (ones' socioeconomic and symbolic status) with other advantageous groups (e.g. ethnic Turkish middle-class supporters of the AKP)– in the urban context facilitate the HDP voting among the upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments. After all, I argue that the grievances and relative deprivation are significant factors in understanding the Kurdish support for the HDP. Figure 1 outlines the hypotheses and analytical framework of the dissertation. Table 1 maps out the organization and findings of the ethnographic chapters.

Since this research strives for the class-based analysis of Kurdish voting behavior, it is necessary to discuss the ways of operationalizing and measuring classes and class segments. It is well-known that income, education, employment, occupation and consumption are regarded as the main indicators of class, but its common usage is based on the stratification of income groups (Paradowski and Flynn, 2015). Voting studies generally consider three major classes – upper/middle/lower classes – in measuring class positions via income proxy.

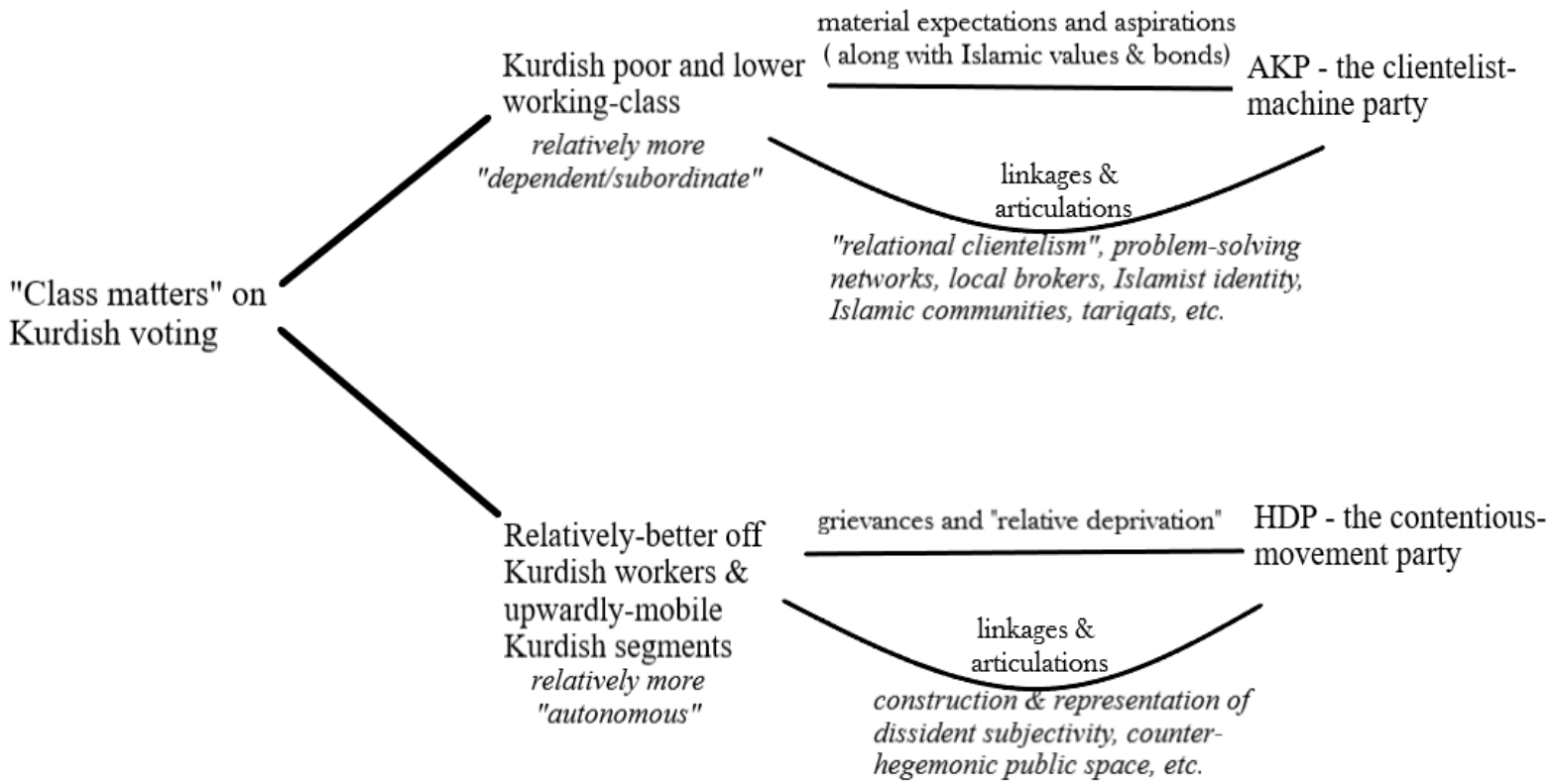

Fig. 1 Analytical framework of the thesis

Table 1. Outline of the Fieldwork; Organizational Linkages and Political Articulations

Political parties Levels of analysis	AKP: the clientelist-machine party that manages the Kurdish poverty	HDP: the social movement-party that catalyze the Kurdish dissidence
Resource Mobilization (Mobilization Structures)	• Coethnic (Kurdish) brokers and associations • Establishment of the clientelist urban machine • Social assistance, problem-solving networks and relational clientelism (redistribution & recognition) • Developmentalism and "service-politics"	• Kurdish "patriot" shopkeepers, tradesmen and businessmen • Young educated Kurdish professional activists • Kinship networks and communal solidarity • Intellectual and cultural capital
Identity and cultural frames	• Islamist ideology and Islamic brotherhood • Anti-secularism and anti-elitism • Historical Rupture (from the 1990s) • "Internal-external enemies" & the leader cult	• Representation of grievances and relative deprivation • Reconstruction of dissident Kurdish subjectivity • Counter-hegemonic public space in the party platforms
Space or space-making	• Islamization of Bağcılar neighborhoods • Major Islamic communities & tariqats	• Pro-Kurdish space-making in everyday life • Reappropriation of Islam: *Meles*, Masjids and DİAYDER

However income is not always a good indicator of class position, and hence occupation needs to be integrated into analysis.[11] Income can be substituted by or complemented with the occupation and employment status indicators. Manza and Brooks (2008) suggest six occupation categories for analyzing the class-based voting: these are professionals, managers, self-employed, white-collar workers, skilled manual workers and non-skilled workers. Nevertheless, there is a caveat in considering occupation in the electoral analysis. If we want to quantify the class-based voting, it is not possible to order occupational categories from lowest to highest, as we do in income stratification.[12] We only know that there are some hierarchies between the working-class occupations (e.g. unskilled and skilled manual jobs) and middle-class occupations (e.g. professionals-managers). From a Marxist perspective, neither income nor occupational status is a good indicator. In Marxist analysis, what matters is who owns the means of production in the capitalist class relationships. From the Marxist perspective, there are clear exploitation and domination relationships between the bourgeoisie (capitalists/upper-class) and the proletariat (working/lower-class) is obvious, but the attitudes of middle classes are very ambiguous (Callinicos & Harman, 1989).[13]

Recently, some scholars have argued that wealth and asset-ownership can be used as a proxy to measure class positions (Handlin, 2013; Piketty, 2013). Paradowski and Flynn (2015) argue that wealth is a more appropriate and reliable

[11] Evans (2017) argues that "occupational class positions are likely to be more stable than income levels and self-reported estimates of income are prone to bias and error because of ambiguity in what is considered to account as income. There is also the problem of the potential misrepresentation by respondents of their income, which is arguably a somewhat more personal level of information than simply stating a job title. Moreover, having an occupation does, to a substantial degree, account for someone's level of income – as well as a range of other resources such as working conditions, future career prospects and life-time expected income" (p.178).

[12] For more nuanced contemporary analysis of class, see Wright (2015). He attracts attention to locations within production, skills and expertise and relationships to authority and domination.

[13] For instance, while old middle-class support right-wing parties, new middle-class support new left parties in the West.

indicator than income in analyzing the influence of class cleavage on voting behavior. For instance, in assessing informal economic resources, wealth and asset indices can be more reliable than the income measures. While wealth and income are often used interchangeably, they are two different concepts. Basically, income refers to salaries/wages, whereas wealth is about accumulation/asset-ownership (such as residence, automobile, savings account, stocks, and bonds).[14] A recent comparative study shows that, in the developed countries, the effect of wealth is independent of the effect of income on voting; wealthy (especially ultra-wealthy) people are more likely to vote for rightist-conservative parties (Paradowski & Flynn, 2015). Nonetheless, like all other class indicators, wealth and asset indices have deficits. For example, it is hard to measure lower-class status through wealth, since it has already been concentrated in the hands of "rich elites" through globalization and financialization processes.

In addition to these quantitative class measures, there are also qualitative and interpretive conceptualization of class that need to be discussed. In order to investigate the class-based voting behavior, Manza and Brooks (2008) suggest looking at relational and contextual class factors, such as material/economic interests, group-based consciousness and social networks. The factors can only be understood through qualitative analysis. Besides, it is known that working-class politics are performed in workplaces and neighborhoods, and reproduced through the medium of occupational groups, organizations, and unions in everyday life (Aykaç, 2009; Birelma, 2014). It might be challenging to measure these mediums and intermediaries through empirical analysis, but it is necessary to discuss the class-politics nexus in everyday life.

[14] "Income provides a 'snapshot' of inflows but does not necessarily capture patterns of long-term accumulation" (Handlin, 2013, p. 146).

Therefore, this research adopts a relational and comparative approach on class voting. Recognizing the fact that the available sociological studies on the Kurdish issue (focusing on forced migration, new urban poverty, and social exclusion) and political studies on the Kurdish voting behavior (focusing on ethnonationalism or religiosity) rarely speak with each other, this dissertation aims to bridge this gap

1.5 Methodology: statistical and ethnographic methods

Designed as a mixed-methods research, this dissertation utilizes both quantitative and qualitative analysis. In the first part, after introducing the descriptive statistics on Kurdish samples of Bağcılar and in Istanbul, I conduct logistic regression estimation on the samples in order to figure out the class determinants of Kurdish voting, and in the second part, I will conduct ethnographic analysis on the parties and Kurdish voters through interviews and observational data gathered from the fieldwork in Bağcılar. In methodological terms, I believe the regression estimation and ethnographic analysis are not substitutes but complementary.

In the first half of the dissertation, I constructed two samples – the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar and the Kurdish sample of Istanbul – by using the KONDA survey results, which consist of 60 monthly surveys between 2010 and 2015. The KONDA surveys are suitable for my research in many respects – including data on demographics, ethnicity, voting, income, education, asset-ownership, financial capability and religiosity patterns.

In the second half of the dissertation, through ethnographic analysis, I explore the linkages and articulations that are employed by the AKP and the HDP in the mobilization of Kurdish electorate. It is necessary to discuss the ethnographic

methodology used in this research. The political ethnography provides a convenient perspective and tools to shift the attention from macro- to micro-politics. Tilly (2006, 410) suggests that "[t]o the extent that politics actually consists not of big structures and prescribed roles but of dynamic, contingent interaction among persons, households, and small groups, political ethnography provides privileged access to its processes, causes, and effects." Wacquant (2003) describes this methodology as "social research based on the close-up, on-the-ground observation of people and institutions in real time and space, in which the investigator embeds herself near (or within) the phenomenon so as to detect how and why agents on the scene act, think and feel the way they do" (p. 5). The ethnographic method requires the researcher's "immersion" into the field and the lives of people under study (Wedeen, 2010). The ethnographers are expected to provide insightful analysis primarily based on the actors' actual experiences and own narratives. The ethnographic method may compensate the shortcomings of conventional political analysis by providing everyday perspectives of actors.

> Ethnography is particularly well-equipped to capture the practice of politics (strategic choices), the signification of these practices (culture/meaning-making)' as they unfold, and the confusions, emotions, and uncertainties that, although inherent in all forms of political action, conventional political analysis tends to dismiss (or ignore) as either 'noise' or anecdotal information with no relevance for what 'really' matters. Ethnography is also particularly useful to capture changing and/or persistent beliefs and their relationship to specific practices and the nitty-gritty details and effects of different forms of political action, networks, and tactics (Auyero et al., 2007, p. 3).

Through the ethnographic method, it is possible to capture the moments of contestations within the macro-political structures and uncover the frameworks of meaning-making related to contestations and the repertoires of resistance of disadvantageous or subaltern actors.

Wedeen (2010) prefers to call political ethnography as a semiotic practice of meaning-making of politics. She contends that the 'participant observation' technique generally connotes the ethnographic methodology in political science. However, Tilly (2006) emphasize the diversity of ethnographic tools, which encompass "a continuum of procedures for collection of evidence, from intrusive to inobtrusive [such as] the in-depth interviews, conversation, participant observation, passive observation of interaction, covert observation of interaction, and inobtrusive observation concerning residues and consequences of interaction" (p. 410).

In light of this discussion, this study adopts the political ethnography method to analyze different Kurdish political mobilizations and preferences in the urban context. Although I have faced serious limitations and problems during my fieldwork, I was able to conduct 28 in-depth interviews with the Kurdish voters, 2 focus-group interviews at the party offices of the HDP and the AKP, and numerous participant observations in party campaigns and activities between 2014 and 2018 in Bağcılar. In particular, I worked in the IT division of the HDP Bağcılar –i.e. the information processing and management unit– between the 2015 and 2018 general elections. This provided me the opportunity to get new contacts in the field. I found my interviewees mainly through snowball sampling.

Since I started my fieldwork in Bağcılar in 2014, the political turmoil that the country went through seriously limited the research process that I had previously planned. First and foremost, there were at least six explosions targeting civilians by the ISIS (the Islamic State) and the PKK (the Kurdistan Workers' Party) and numerous armed attacks and lynching incidents towards Kurdish people in Istanbul (for the brief chronology of the recent history, see Appendix B). The risk of being killed or at least getting beaten (either by Turkish nationalists or the police) for no

reason caused distress, as my Kurdish contacts in the HDP Bağcılar branch often advised me to be careful and watch my steps during the fieldwork. Besides these incidents, the Gezi uprisings in 2013 and subsequent political repression of opponent groups (especially socialists and the Kurdish politicians and activists), the collapse of "the Kurdish resolution process" (2013-2015) and the end of "the peace talks," the escalation of violence between the Turkish military and the PKK, the terror attacks and suicide bombings of the ISIS all over Turkey, the coup attempt of the Gulenists in 15 July 2016 and the following State of Emergency (OHAL) rule that lasted two years, have interrupted my planned research, postponed my pre-determined schedule and compelled me to take long breaks in the fieldwork.

Under these adverse conditions, Kurdish voters have often felt disappointed and estranged, and become hesitant in expressing their political views and talking about the quite sensitive political debates. The respondents believe that there is always the danger of being arrested and imprisoned if they express something "wrong", which is defined as "full authoritarianism" (Çalışkan, 2018). While it is somehow more manageable for me to find informants from the HDP, as I am much more familiar with the HDP beforehand because of my leftist political affiliation and friend circle, it was more difficult for me to reach the religious-conservative Kurds supporting the AKP in Bağcılar. In order to create an environment of trust for the pro-AKP Kurdish informants, I had to find safe and credible contacts from the Islamist circles. Despite these efforts, I faced serious problems in reaching the pro-AKP Kurdish voters. This failure postponed my planned schedule for the interviews with pro-AKP Kurds. The religious conservative Kurds, especially those members of the Islamic communities and tariqats, hesitated to narrate their life stories and political views. Many pro-AKP Kurdish informants canceled our planned meetings

because of their “busy schedules” or “sickness. Nonetheless, by finding new contacts from the AKP organization itself in 2017, I completed my interviews with the pro-AKP Kurds in 2018. In contrast to the hesitations of the religious-conservative Kurds, the pro-HDP Kurdish informants mostly accepted my invitation for interview; they were very articulate in narrating their grievance and mourning once provided with the necessary confidence.

In spite of my easy access to the pro-HDP Kurdish electorate in Bağcılar, many Kurdish activists of the HDP that I interviewed at the beginning of the fieldwork in 2013 were arrested and imprisoned for political reasons – such as “supporting the terrorist organization” or “making terrorist propaganda” in the social media. Many of them were later released as their cases ended for lack of evidence. While I was able to reach some of them later, I learned that some of them had already left the country. The administrative cadre of the HDP that I met in my first visit is totally different than the ones I met in my last visits to the headquarters to the party. Therefore, the gatekeeper problem and the discontinuities in the fieldwork created trust issues with the HDP informants. As I was much more familiar with the old setting and old actors, I had to inspire confidence for the new cadre of Kurdish “comrades” (“*yoldaş*” in Turkish or “*heval*” in Kurdish) and reassure them about the confidentiality of the interviews. Furthermore, I had to confront the emotional and psychological burden of losing “comrades” from the HDP during the fieldwork. It was indeed very depressing for me as a researcher and a friend not knowing whether they are in exile or dead and whether I can see them ever again.

It is a well-known fact that one of the primary principles of ethnographic research is establishing trust relationships with the locals. In this way, an ethnographer might be able to capture the insiders’ point of view (O’Reilly, 2005,

pp. 10-12). In stark contrast, the political upheavals and pressures in Turkey in the last decade have seriously effaced the interpersonal and inter-group trust relationships. Therefore, my first and foremost duty in the fieldwork becomes proving myself, as a Turkish outsider, to my informants that I am not "a potential spy," "a traitor," or "the state agent." In addition to the trust problem, the environment of fear that spread all over Turkey sometimes made my efforts futile and meaningless; I could not continue the fieldwork because the informants had more urgent agendas than talking about their life stories and political preferences. With the escalation of violence in the Kurdish populated provinces once again after 2015, some Kurdish informants became isolated and preferred to keep their silence; others became radicalized by adopting antagonistic and reactionary discourses.

Under these circumstances, it often became difficult to conduct ethnography with ordinary encounters. Collecting stories and political narratives with my own alarming anxiety under life-threatening conditions and escalating violence have gone beyond the "normal" fieldwork experience. The political turmoil of Turkey in the last five years reminds me of severe turbulence that an airplane goes through. My ethnographic experience under these circumstances –i.e., swinging plane under turbulence– involves, on the one hand, my own experience of anxiety and depression, and on the other hand, my observations of other passengers' fearful experiences. On account of these difficulties, the ethnography spread through four years.

1.6 The case of Kurdish voters in Istanbul

It is difficult to find reliable figures on the Kurdish population living in Istanbul. Due to the lack of official statistics on the subject, most researchers estimate the Kurdish

population by the proxy of birthplace (registration in Kurdish populated provinces in the eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey), whereas a small minority of researchers are able to use the surveys of private research companies that include a question on ethnicity. By using birthplace proxy, it estimated the Kurdish population is approximately 15 percent of the total Istanbul population in 2015 (Perouse, 2016). However, this estimation raises a concern about which provinces in eastern and southeastern Turkey should be counted as "Kurdish cities." For instance, Erzurum, Elazığ, Sivas are often not counted as "Kurdish cities" despite the sizable Kurdish population in these provinces. There is another caveat in this estimation: some "ethnic Kurds," whose mother-tongue is Kurmanci or Zazaki, refuse to identify themselves as Kurdish. Therefore, the question at stake is how to define Kurdish identity and measure Kurdish population – by birthplace, mother tongue, political identity, cultural bond, or everyday sentiment.[15] We must keep in mind that "the Kurdish electorate" is not monolithic but involves various political subjectivities and preferences, classes and status, etc. The best way to tackle this question is designing research based on the self-definition of Kurdishness.

For the sake of simplicity, the Kurdish migration to Istanbul can be categorized into two waves: The first migration wave involving the provinces of the north-eastern peripheries such as Erzincan, Kars, Erzurum, Sivas, and Malatya had occurred mainly because of economic reasons between 1950 and the 1970s. The second migration wave involving the provinces of the south-eastern peripheries such as Diyarbakır, Siirt, Bitlis, Şırnak, Batman, Hakkari, Mardin, Bingöl, and Van

[15] It is necessary to recognize that Kurdish identity, like all other ethnic and racial categories, is not a homogenous and taken-for-granted. Çiçek (2016) argues that Kurdishness is "a heterogeneous and open-ended plural identity" and attracts attention to different political subjectivities within the Kurdish population in Turkey – i.e. the pro-nationalist Kurdishness, pro-Islamic (Sunni) Kurdishness and the Alevi Kurdishness (p. 2).

occurred between the end of the 1980s and early 2000s (Perouse, 2010). The latter is also known as the forced migration because it was the result of the militarist security policies of the Turkish state. As a matter of fact, the Turkish state for a long time resorted to militarist policies in handling the Kurdish issue and repressed the political and cultural demands of Kurdish dissidents. Yeğen (1999) argues that the official state discourse towards the Kurdish issue in Turkey was based on assimilation and denial. The violence towards Kurdish citizens escalated after the PKK had started direct attacks on the Turkish military from 1984 onwards. In response, the Turkish army "cleared" thousands of Kurdish populated villages and hamlets for security reasons.

The clashes between the PKK and the Turkish military resulted in the forced migration of Kurdish masses throughout the 1990s.[16] According to official statistics, it is estimated that more than 3,000 Kurdish villages and hamlets were evacuated, and about 1,200,000 Kurdish citizens were displaced. However, informal statistics reveal a more overwhelming figure; almost 4.5 million Kurdish people were displaced (Evrensel, 2010). As a result of the forced migration policy, the Kurdish population had first migrated to the urban areas in the Kurdish region, then migrated to the metropolitan cities in western Turkey, especially to Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. Consequently, what is traditionally known as "the Kurdish issue" has transcended the peripheral boundaries of eastern and southeastern Turkey and turned into "the new urban Kurdish issue" with multiple political-economic dimensions.[17] In

[16] In the 1990s, Kurdish populated eastern and southeastern provinces in Turkey witnessed popular uprisings, *serhildans*, against the unprecedented violence of the Turkish state. The war between the Kurdish guerillas and Turkish military had intensified between 1989 and 1993, which resulted in the thousands of deaths, including guerillas, soldiers and civilians, hundreds of unidentified murders, the devastation of villages and the massive forced migration of Kurdish people. In order to prevent the popular and logistic support of the PKK, the state declared the state of emergency in all Kurdish cities and implemented the village guardianship program. Kurdish society that had resisted the military pressures were displaced.

[17] Almost all accounts that adhere to the modernization and developmentalism theory until the 1990s

this period, Istanbul has become the largest Kurdish city not only in Turkey but also in the world. In 2002, Sayarı and Esmer argue that,

> In large metropolitan centers such as Istanbul and Izmir […] as well as the rest of western Turkey in general, migrants of Kurdish origin, who are by and large unskilled and low-paid laborers, typically live in the [former] *gecekondu* settlements. Many tend to live close to their relatives and those from the same village or town. Thus, they form the closely knit neighborhood clusters. However, compared to the east and the southeast, in large cities lifestyles are more diverse, traditional mechanisms of social control are weaker, the ethnic Kurdish communities are more stratified, and interaction with non-Kurds are more frequent both in the workplace and in public. Although ethnic identity is also a significant dimension of social interaction in everyday life, social and economic problems can be as significant as ethnic identity in influencing voting behavior (p. 145).

From the late 1990s onwards, under the conditions of neoliberal capitalism, the Kurdish migrants have either been transformed into the reserve army of labor in the metropolis or pushed into the margins of the urban economy as cheap and flexible labor. As the major constituent of the new informal proletariat, Kurdish migrants have often turned into sub-contract workers in the construction sector, unskilled laborers in the textile industry, peddlers in the periodic bazaars and streets, and scavengers in the city streets. In the late 2000s, the literature on the subject predominantly depicted the gloomy picture of "social exclusion" for explaining the conditions of Kurdish migrants in the urban slums. The forced migration of Kurds from rural to urban areas has overlapped with the dissolution of the traditional welfare regime and the rise of the neoliberal accumulation regime. This period signals a critical transformation from "integrated poverty" of the previous developmental period, in which the poor migrants were integrated into urban space through the *gecekondu*s, chain migration pattern and traditional bonds of kinship and colocality ("*hemşehrilik*"), to a "new exclusionry poverty" under the neoliberal

claimed that Kurdish issue is a specific rural-regional problem, or some evaluate it as ethnopolitical issue. For the new urban character of "Kurdish issue," see (Göral, 2010, 2016).

capitalism, under which the socioeconomic integration of Kurdish migrants was severely constrained by the structural factors (Adaman & Keyder, 2006).[18] In this context, the neoliberalization of urban economy brought forward the precarization and informalization of Kurdish migrant-workers. In most cases, Kurdish migrants had no option but to work in the most precarious jobs in the informal sector (Yörük, 2014).

In the 2000s, most studies on the Kurdish migrants adopted "the deficit frame" and referred to the social exclusion of Kurdish migrants.[19] The deficit frame does not only address the constraining structural factors on the lives of Kurdish migrants but also their disempowerment in the face of multiple processes of deprivation, discrimination, exclusion, stigmatization and criminalization in the metropolis. In the American context, Hunter and Robinson (2016) argue that as much as "the urban question more definitively became the 'Negro question' or the 'Negro problem,' work in the sociology of urban Black America emphasized the deficit frame more explicitly, sometimes to the exclusion or denial of the asset frame" (p.

[18] Turkish governments applied the state-led developmentalist policies vis-à-vis the import-substitution industrialization strategy, like other capitalist semi-peripheral countries, to achieve high rates of economic growth between 1960s and 1980s. In this developmentalist period, *gecekondu*s (the informal housing) of migrant-workers in urban slums were tolerated by the state authorities for the social reproduction of labor force. This was required not only for maintaining the constant labor-power for factories but also for creating solid consumer demand for new products. However, with the introduction of neoliberal doctrine in the 1980s, the export-led growth replaced the old developmentalist accumulation regime. From the 1980s onwards, the Turkish economy has integrated into global financial markets, and become dependent on financial inflows or foreign direct investments. As the FİRE (finance, insurance and real estate) sectors have replaced the existing industries, the demand for constant –formal– labor power has seriously diminished.

[19] Basically, "the deficit frame" refers to structural constraints, "the asset frame" refers to agency, resilience, and resistance. In the urban sociology of Blacks in America, the deficit frame explains "the socio-economic structures that constrains (negatively affect) Black urban life or the cultural 'deficits' that disempowers and stigmatize Blacks in urban space," and the asset frame explains "agency and cultural contributions of urban Black Americans, including social movement, space-making, everyday and formal political action." The latter perspective suggests looking at "how Black Americans survive, challenge, and remake the circumstances structural changes cause, highlighting patterns of resiliency and persistence in spite of structure. This perspective assumes that resistance practices and strategies are a beneficial specialized knowledge that accrued to Black Americans…over multiple generations." (Hunter & Robinson, 2106, pp. 385-387) For some notable examples that adopted the "deficit frame" in analyzing the Kurdish migrants, see Keyder (2005), Buğra and Keyder (2003, 2006), Adaman and Keyder (2006), Yılmaz (2008).

391). Similarly, in Turkey, as the urban question became "the Kurdish question" or "the Kurdish problem" in the 1990s and 2000s, sociological and political studies on the subject emphasize the deficit frame, in which the exclusion and marginalization became dominant. In assessing the main characteristics of urban poverty in Istanbul in the 1990s, Işık and Pınarcıoğlu (2001) asserted that earlier migrants had been able to accumulate wealth at the expense of others by using their advantage of early-arrival to the city and communal-kinship networks. Therefore, the migrant communities had been differentiated on the class and status axes in the urban space. They defined the strategy of "poverty-in-turns" ("*nöbetleşe yoksulluk*"), which referred to the earlier migrants' survival and upward mobility by deploying their communal relations and exploiting the conditions of newcomers. These strategies were based on the transfer of the burden of poverty to the disadvantaged or successor immigrant group – i.e., the Kurdish migrants in the case of Istanbul. Many accounts stressed that the burden of poverty was permanently transferred to the poor Kurdish migrants in the 1990s. Regarding the case of forced Kurdish migrants in İzmir, Saraçoğlu (2010) argues that urban poverty had already been ethnicized (or Kurdicized), and Kurdish migrants could not transfer the burden of poverty to other migrant groups, as they were the latest migrant cohort. Sayarı and Esmer (2002) argue that,

> In the cities, poor Kurdish migrant families usually live in [the former] squatter housing (*gecekondu*) areas […] In these neighborhoods, the existence of widespread unemployment and highly insecure living conditions foster feelings of resentment and a sense of deprivation among the Kurds. Because they usually perceive social inequality in terms of ethnicity, the Kurds place greater emphasis on their ethnic bonds and identities (p. 140).

Although it is possible to observe some cases in which Kurdish migrants transfer the burden of poverty among their own communities (e.g. early-comer Adıyaman Kurds achieved upward mobility over Bitlis Kurds), there is almost no

case in which Kurdish migrants transfer the burden of poverty outside their communities (Saraçoğlu, 2010). Many academic accounts in this period equated the phenomena of "new urban poverty" and "social exclusion" with the Kurdish migrants in Turkey. Some studies in this period even claimed that the Kurdish migrants became the primary candidate of 'permanent underclass' in Istanbul (Keyder, 2005; Yılmaz, 2008).

In contrast to the dominant deficit frame in these previous studies, some recent studies on the urban Kurdish issue have adopted "the asset frame."[20] These recent studies have stressed the agency of Kurdish migrants, successful political mobilization, class mobility and shifting dynamics within the Kurdish population in the urban context. Some of these new studies focus on the practices of everyday resistance and space-making, communal solidarity, formation of working-class identity, and even in some cases, upward mobility.[21] Instead of focusing on the structural constraints, these studies attract attention to the agency of Kurdish migrants and discuss the structural opportunities, resource mobilization, and resistance frames. For instance, the dominance of the informal economy in the urban space is not necessarily a deficit; despite few in numbers, some Kurds have accumulated wealth by using the informal resources and transactions in Istanbul. As Yılmaz (2014) underscores, there are multiple trajectories of urban capitalism ranging from proletarianization to middle-classization for the Kurdish migrants.

As an unintended consequence of forced migration, some Kurdish migrants concentrated in the same districts and neighborhoods in the metropolis, formed niche

[20] It is not practical to accuse the previous studies, which exclusively focused on constraints and deficits and underestimated the changing dynamics within Kurdish migrant population in the city, with short-sightedness. As they focused on the devastating conditions of Kurdish migrants just after the war and forced migration, they could not anticipate future conditions.
[21] For some recent studies that adopted the "asset frame" perspective in analyzing the Kurdish migrants, see (Göral, 2010, 2016, Kanzık 2010, Kılıçarslan 2013, Yörük 2013, Yılmaz 2014)

economies and communal solidarities in these localities. The Kurdish movement has become dominant in these localities and thus the pro-Kurdish parties have become contesting political actors. In her analysis of Kanarya neighborhood in Küçükçekmece, Kılıçarslan (2013) argues that, in contrast to the sweeping "exclusion" argument and the deficit frame, dissident Kurdish community has already integrated into the city in terms of political, economic and social aspects. Kurdish migrants have reconstructed the traditional solidarity bonds such as kinship and extended family to survive in the city. Micro-entrepreneurship has become very prevalent among them, as hundreds of Kurdish small entrepreneurs established their own textile workshops in the peripheries of Istanbul. Small number of Kurdish migrant-businessmen involved in informal economic activities, got their share from rentier capitalism in the construction sector and were able to accumulate wealth.

By looking at the lives of Kurdish migrants in the urban space after more than 20 years, these new studies reveal that some segments among the Kurdish population have adopted effective strategies for overcoming discrimination and marginalization, and developed communal solidarity in the face of the neoliberal capitalist inequalities. Nonetheless, it is necessary to remark that while small minority of Kurdish population have become middle-class, most of the Kurdish population are still poor working-class in the peripheries of Istanbul. These observations indicate the significance of socio-economic cleavages in understanding Kurdish voting behavior as well as the Kurdish-populated peripheral localities in the metropolis, which directs our attention to the case of Bağcılar.

1.7 The case of Bağcılar

According to the 2015 national census, Bağcılar is the most populous district in Istanbul.[22] Also, it has the largest Kurdish population in Istanbul in terms of the election results and the birth-place proxy. The selection criteria of Bağcılar for the fieldwork will be discussed in detail later (see, Chapter 3), in which I will depict the descriptive statistics on the Kurdish population in Bağcılar and Istanbul. In this section, I will discuss the historical background of Bağcılar and prevailing demographic, social and economic patterns as well as the electoral trends in the district.

Bağcılar is located on the European side of Istanbul and surrounded by five other districts: Küçükçekmece in the western axis, Bahçelievler in the southern axis, Esenler in the eastern and northern axes, Güngören in the southeast axis and Başakşehir in the northwest axis – see Figure 2. From the late Ottoman period to the 1950s, Bağcılar was known as a small village of Mahmutbey ("*nahiye*"). Mahmutbey village was one of the oldest settlement areas in Istanbul and initially populated by the Greek minority. The *nahiye* had consisted of 11 villages in the late Ottoman and early Republican periods: Kalfa (today where Mahmutbey neighborhood located), Avas, Ayapa (today Kirazlı), Ayayorgi, Vidos, İkitelli, Litros, Nifos, Şamlar, Yenibosna and Çıfıtburgaz (today Bağcılar). In 1929, 63 Bulgarian migrant families from Varna bought the lands known as Çıfıtburgaz and started grapery there for subsistence. As Çıfıtburgaz was famous with its almost 40 types of grape in the 1930s, the area began to be called Bağcılar (literally means "grapery"). In addition to the grape production, small farmers of the region also engaged in cereal and fruit

[22] However, Bağcılar fell behind Esenyurt and Küçükçekmece in terms of population in the 2018 census. It is no coincidence that İstanbul's three most populous districts, Bağcılar, Küçükçekmece and Esenyurt, become significant actors after the forced Kurdish migrations in the 1990s (TUIK, 2018).

farming in this period. For a long time, agriculture has remained the dominant means of subsistence. Because of this rural background, Bağcılar was an underdeveloped district with small streets and lack of infrastructure until the 1990s.

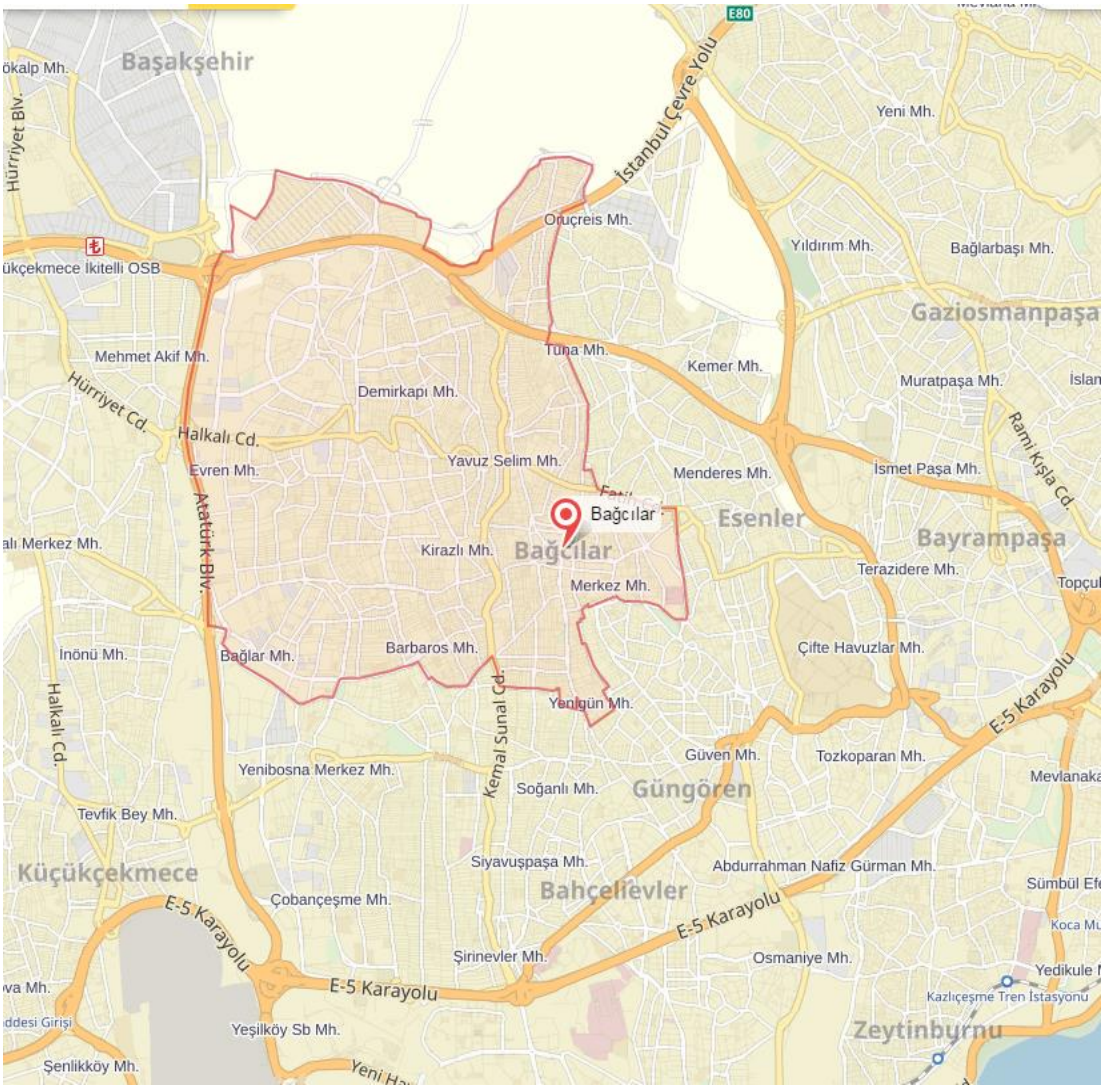

Fig. 2 Map of Bağcılar – Google Maps

With the incorporation of Mahmutbey, Kirazlı, Güneşli (i.e. Papazçiftliği in past) neighborhoods, Bağcılar was officially declared as a municipality in 1992. This decision was taken mainly due to massive population inflow in the 1980s and 1990s. With the subsequent rural-to-urban migration waves, Bağcılar's population increased more than threefold during this period. According to the Bağcılar Municipality Survey (2006), 74.7 percent of the households have migrated to the district after

1990. In other words, as it is seen in Table 2, three-quarters of the current population migrated to the district in the 1990s. As it is easily noticed, the most recent migrant wave to Bağcılar consisted of Kurdish migrants (Balaban, 2011). After the forced migration policy, the massive influx of Kurdish migrants marked the demographic composition of the district.

Table 2. Bağcılar's Population

Year	Population
1985	203,175
1990	291,457
1997	487,896
2000	556,519
2007	719,267
2008	720,819
2009	724,268
2010	738,809
2011	746,650
2012	749,024
2013	752,250
2014	754,623
2015	757,162
2016	751,510
2017	748,483
2018	734,369

Source: TUIK (2018)

Nonetheless, for the first time in the history of the district, a reverse migration trend has occurred, and the Bağcılar's population began to decline after 2015. Those Bağcılar residents who achieved upward class mobility have started to move to the neighboring "developed" districts – such as Bahçelievler and Başakşehir. As a matter of fact, Başakşehir's population has increased by at least 21 percent in the same period (TUIK, 2018).[23]

[23] Başakşehir is well-known for its better-off closed communities. Both the Turkish and Kurdish informants in my fieldwork stated that their friends and relatives leave the district soon after they earn enough income and achieve upward mobility to live in more "safe" and "secure" areas. Nonetheless, the declining population of Bağcılar can also be explained by the fact that some of the Kurdish people has returned to their villages.

Today the Bitlis Kurds are the most crowded community in Bağcılar, and then comes the Sivas community as the second-largest group – see Table 3. Nonetheless, Turkish migrants still outweigh the Kurdish migrants in the demographics of Bağcılar. This fact may be attributed to the chain-migration pattern of the Turkish migrants starting from the 1960s onwards.

Table 3. Birthplaces of the Bağcılar Residents

Registration (Hometown)	Population
İstanbul	46,648
Bitlis	43,283
Sivas	39,605
Malatya	35,220
Ordu	34,282
Samsun	31,610
Kastamonu	31,455
Tokat	28,299
Giresun	27,837
Sinop	24,907
Adıyaman	24,380
Diyarbakır	21,671
Batman	21,140

Source: TUIK (2018)

Even though there are 22 neighborhoods in official statistics, the surface area of Bağcılar is indeed limited, which is 22 km^2. Therefore, the population density (33.582 people per square kilometer in 2010) is very high in Bağcılar compared to the general Istanbul figure (Temurçin, 2012, 110).[24] Respectively, Demirkapı, Evren, and Yüzyıl (see Figure 3) are the most populous neighborhoods of the district (TUIK 2013). The high population density has led to settlement in firmly attached apartment buildings in the narrow and dark streets in almost all neighborhoods of Bağcılar. The high population density can be attributed to the larger household size in Bağcılar. In

[24] This is much higher than the general Istanbul figure, which 2836/km2.

2013, Bağcılar's average household size was 4.16, whereas Istanbul's average household size is 3.53 (TUIK, 2013).

There are neither clear-cut boundaries between Kurdish and Turkish space nor a demarcation between Kurdish- and Turkish-populated neighborhoods in Bağcılar. Different ethnic groups live in mixed neighborhoods. Nonetheless, in some neighborhoods, Kurdish population density is extremely high – e.g., Demirkapı. These neighborhoods are stigmatized as "the Kurdish neighborhood" or "little Kurdistan" in public perception.

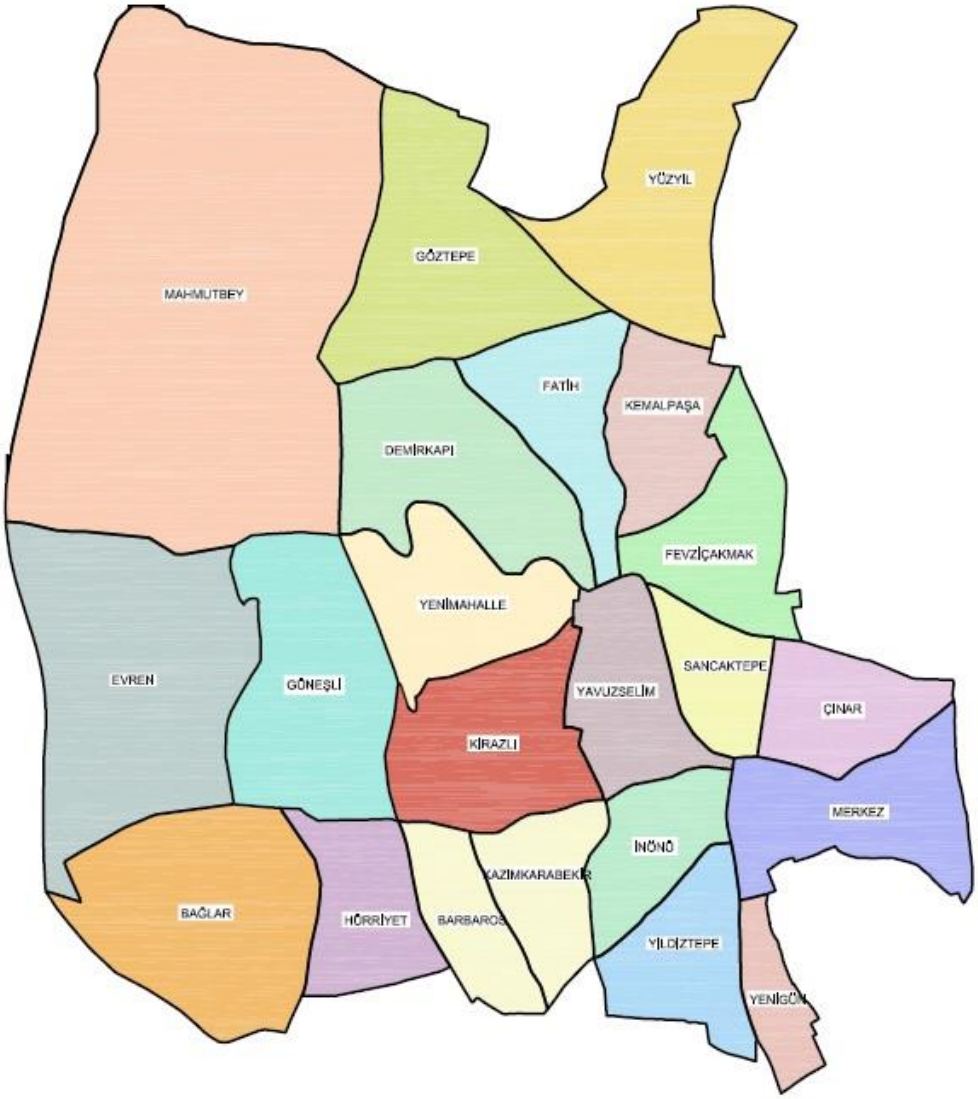

Fig. 3 The map of Bağcılar neighborhoods, Bağcılar Municipality (2016)

The electoral results and my field observations indicate that Kurdish population concentration is remarkably high on the northeastern axis of the district – particularly in Demirkapı, Fatih, Kemalpaşa, and Yenimahalle neighborhoods. Early Turkish migrants, especially those from Sivas, Malatya, Ordu, and other eastern-Anatolian provinces, live in the central neighborhoods. Although the earliest settlers of Bağcılar are Greek and Balkan migrants, who moved to the district as early as the 1930s, today only a small minority continues to live in Mahmutbey. There are other minority groups in the district, such as small Yugoslav and Bosnian populations, who had migrated to the district after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s.

The massive Kurdish immigration in the 1990s to the district coincided with the semi-peripheral industrialization of Bağcılar (see Table 4). The commodification of urban land vis-à-vis the neoliberal reforms made Istanbul's urban center very valuable in this period; industrial production had been moved to the peripheries, such as İkitelli, Beylikdüzü, and Tuzla.[25] During the 1990s, the growing reserve army of Kurdish migrant-labor vis-à-vis the development of Bağcılar attracted attention of capitalist investors and technocrats (Balaban, 2011). Bağcılar became an incredibly significant setting for industrial production with its connection to the most significant highways of Istanbul and thus easy access to Anatolian and European markets. As shown in Figure 2, Bağcılar is located between the two major highways, E-80 (TEM) and E-5 (D100). Temurçin (2012) suggests the semi-peripheral industrialization experience in Bağcılar can neither be attributed to the availability of raw materials nor energy resources in the district but can be explained with the transportation opportunities and huge migrant labor reserve. Starting from the late 1980s onwards,

[25] Today peripherilization of industrial production continues, as many large-scale firms have transferred their production facilities to the outskirts of the city, such as Çerkezköy district.

specialization in the textile sector has provided a comparative advantage for the industrialists and traders of the district.

As of the early 2010s, there are 710 formally registered industrial facilities in the district, but there is no available figure on informal workshops (Temurçin, 2012). Of those registered facilities officially, 48.5 percent is small-scale facility with less than 25 workers, and 51.5 percent is middle and large-scale facilities with more than 25 workers – see Table 4. The majority of these industrial facilities are quite new in Bağcılar, as 77 percent have been founded in the 1990s and 2000s.

Table 4. Registered Industrial Facilities in Bağcılar (1950-today)

Foundation Year	25 and more workers	Less than 25 workers	Total
1950-1960	2	0	2
1960-1970	8	5	13
1970-1980	19	21	40
1980-1990	82	24	106
1990-2000	151	142	293
2000-2010	104	152	256
Total	366	344	710

Source: Temurçin (2012)

Today, Bağcılar is a quite complex industrial district that operates like a huge urban factory with hundreds of small-scale textile workshops scattering all over the neighborhoods (Balaban, 2011). Thousands of Kurdish migrants are most likely to work in these small textile workshops. Garments and ready-made clothing sectors dominate local production. The famous Turkish apparel and leather fabrics are produced through subcontracting in the district – e.g. *Taha Giyim* (LC Waikiki), *Çak Tekstil* (Littlebig), *Hey Tekstil* (Zara, Reebok, Espirit), *Ziylan Ayakkabı* (Polaris, Kinetix, Flogart).

In Bağcılar, the active labor force participation is quite high –68 percent, and 50 percent of the active labor force work in the manufacturing industry as of 2010 (Temurçin, 2012). In conformity with its industrial character, the wage-labor is the

dominant means of subsistence among the inhabitants of the district (Bağcılar Municipality Survey, 2006). The early-comer (Turkish) migrants have more solid employment opportunities and diversified economic resources than the late-comer (Kurdish) migrants (Bağcılar Municipality Survey, 2006). Turkish workers had more probability of finding formal jobs. As it will be discussed in detail in the ethnographic chapters, after the forced migration in the 1990s, most of the Kurdish migrants became unskilled manual workers in the textile and hardware sectors, worked as street-peddlers and porters in the wholesale vegetable market, fruit sellers in weekly neighborhood bazaars, waiters and dishwashers in the service sector, and sub-contracted workers in the construction sector in Bağcılar.

According to the Bağcılar Municipality Survey (2006), more than half of the population stated that they prefer to live in the district because of employment opportunities in textiles, service industry and construction sectors in-and-around the district – see Figure 4. Besides, almost half of the population stated that they prefer to settle in the district to be close with their family members, relatives, and *hemşeri*s (i.e. colocals/villagers).[26]

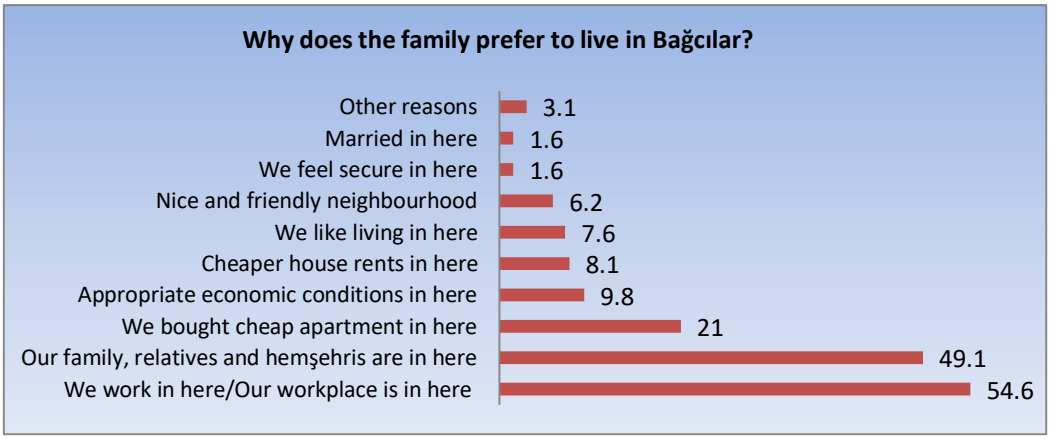

Fig. 4 The reasons behind the settlement in the district, Bağcılar Municipality Survey (2006)

[26] Considering the chain migration pattern before the 1990s, the settlement decisions of Turkish migrants mostly depended upon their previous contacts in the city. However, the settlement of Kurdish migrants to the district did not follow the chain migration pattern, as they had to migrate in a relatively short period. Most Kurds migrated because of the forced migration policy and low-intensity war in the 1990s. Notwithstanding that, Kurds' settlement decision also depended on the information they got from their previous contacts.

Recently, the AKP's Bağcılar Municipality declared five urban transformation projects with the excuse of the unorganized settlement and unhealthy buildings in the face of the risk of earthquake in the five neighborhoods: Evren (THY Buildings), Demirkapı (Albayraklar Buildings), Göztepe, Kemalpaşa, and Merkez neighborhoods around the Bağcılar's main square. Two of these urban transformation projects, namely *THY* and *Albayraklar*, are about the renewal of existing multi-story buildings, where Turkish middle-class families have resided. Other urban renewal projects in Göztepe and Kemalpaşa address primarily poor working-class populations – including Kurds. Although most of the title-owners seem satisfied with the conditions offered to them with the renewal projects, as they expect the market value of their apartments would rise, the ambiguous status of poor tenants who could not claim any housing right make them very fragile in their encounters with the municipality and the contractors.

According to the Municipality Survey (2006), the overwhelming majority (93 percent) of the dwellers stated that they do not trust their apartment buildings' security vis-à-vis earthquakes. The dwellers often declare that they have built their buildings by themselves with no technical knowledge, expertise, or planning. The Turkish migrants from the Black Sea region used to be the forerunners of construction of the local apartment buildings, as many of them later specialized in the construction business and became well-known private contractors in the district. Nonetheless, the self-construction of apartment buildings is also very widespread among the late-comer Kurdish migrants. The conventional story is as follows: the migrants had initially erected single-story *gecekondu* apartments and then depending on their ability to extract financial resources through debt relations from family and

kinship members, they were able build upper floors –this way *gecekondu*s turned into *apartkondu*s (see Appendix J).

Today, the AKP and the HDP are the two leading parties in Bağcılar. Despite the fact that the AKP continues to be a dominant party, the voting share of pro-Kurdish parties, BDP and HDP, have increased in the consecutive elections throughout the 2010s in the district (see Table 5).

Table 5. Election Results in Bağcılar

Bağcılar Election Results	AKP votes	Percent	HDP votes	Percent
2011 General Elections	274,132	66.7	31,464[27]	7.7
2014 Local Elections	237,947	56.5	39,183	9.3
2014 Presidential Elections	216,785	60.6	48,917	13.7
June 2015 General Elections	205,170	50.2	69,301	16.9
November 2015 General Elections	264,801	59.6	61,184	13.8
2018 General Elections	225,511	51.7	66,247	15.2
2019 Local Elections	229,593	57.9	50,792	12.8

The HDP increased its vote share in the district more than twofold between 2011 and 2015. The HDP's relative electoral success in the 2010s can be attributed to two factors: the ambivalent attitude and policies of the AKP towards Kurds at the national level, and as a response, the strengthening of the Kurdish movement in the district.[28] Even though the HDP's percentage of votes briefly dropped in the repeated elections in November 2015, the HDP continues to be the second-largest party among the Kurdish electorate in Bağcılar. Ranking behind the AKP, the HDP's vote share has settled at a steady level of around 15 percent in the district. In the last couple of elections, the HDP has called its Kurdish electorate to strategically vote for the CHP to challenge the authoritarian-majoritarian rule of the AKP. In the 2018

[27] In 2011, the HDP is in the process of foundation, so the party at a time was BDP.
[28] It is possible to say that the contradictory policies of AKP in the democratic initiative process, the imprisonment of hundreds of Kurdish politicians amid the peace talks, the AKP's blockage towards the Rojava Kurds and the rumors about the party's implicit support ISIS in fighting the YPG in Kobane directed the Kurdish votes towards HDP at the local, urban and national levels. For the electoral results, see Appendix A.

presidential elections, there were mainly four competing candidates: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of the AKP, Muharrem İnce of the CHP, Selahattin Demirtaş of the HDP and Meral Akşener of the IYI party. In this election, Erdoğan received 52.6 percent of the votes in the district. While Demirtaş got 8.4 percent of the votes, İnce got almost 30 percent of the votes in this election, which is indeed higher than the average vote share that the CHP used to receive in the district. In this election, some Kurdish voters, who used to vote for the HDP, strategically voted for İnce instead of Demirtaş, as a matter of fact, the party supported their decision to prevent the presidency of Erdoğan. In a similar vein, in the 2019 local elections, the HDP decided to support the candidates of the Nation Alliance led by the CHP in major cities and districts. In this regard, the HDP called its Kurdish electorate to vote for the candidate of CHP, Ekrem İmamoğlu, in the elections for the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. Despite the nomination of Huda Kaya, the former deputy of the HDP, in the local elections for the Bağcılar Municipality, the party's vote share has dropped by 2-3 percent; it is because some Kurdish voters strategically voted for the candidate of National Alliance led by CHP in the municipal election.

In the case of Bağcılar, it is easy to discern that there is a correlation between the spatial concentration of the Kurdish population and the HDP votes in the district. The HDP has generally garnered widespread support in Demirkapı, Kemalpaşa, Fatih, Yenimahalle and Fevziçakmak, where the Kurdish population density is remarkably high (see Figure 5 and 6). The Kurdish movement is also stronger in these neighborhoods.

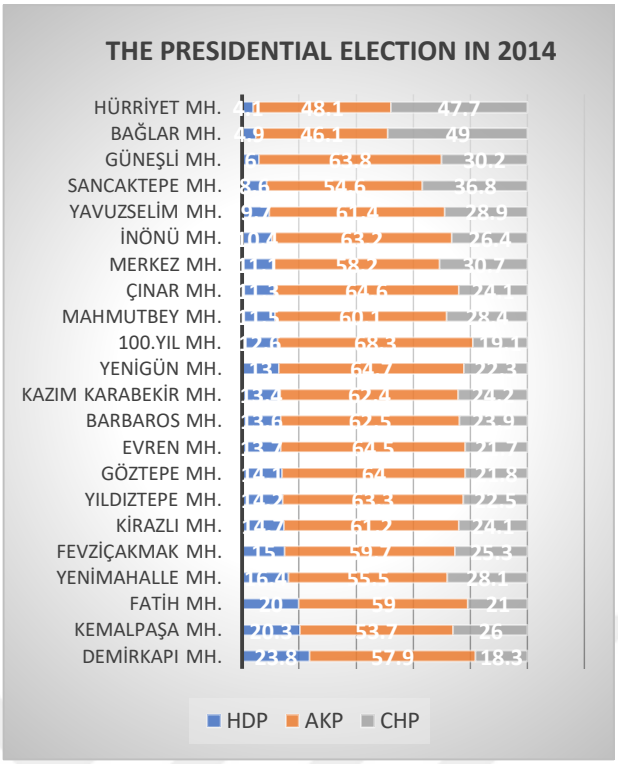

Fig. 5 Neighborhood results of the 2014 presidential elections in Bağcılar

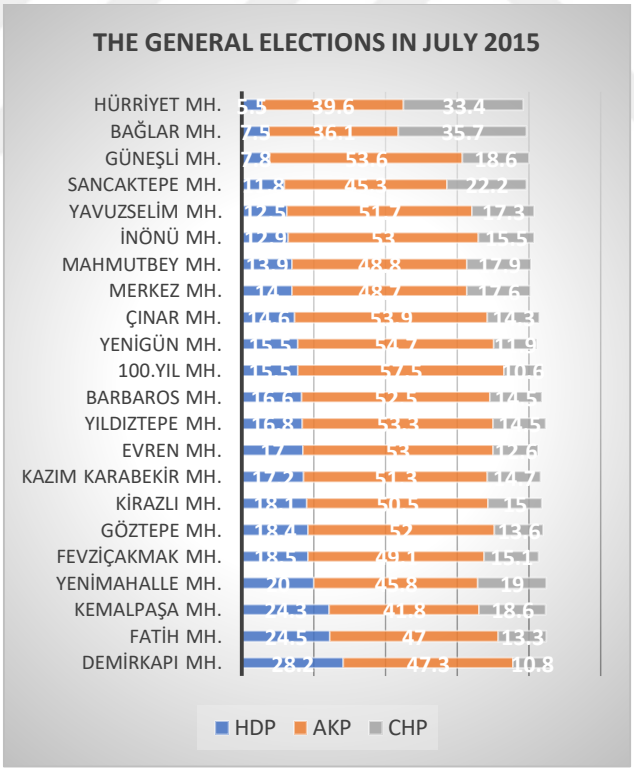

Fig. 6 Neighborhood results of the 2014 general elections in Bağcılar

1.8 The organization of the dissertation

In Chapter 2, I will review the relevant voting and party literatures, contextualize my research in these literatures and develop a theoretical framework. Specifically, first, I

will discuss the cleavage voting and voting behavior, with a particular emphasis on the class voting. Then, I will discuss the scarce literature on Kurdish voting behavior in Turkey. Finally, I will overview the clientelistic machine-party and the contentious movement-party literatures. I will show that the clientelist-machine framework better captures the AKP's linkages and articulations among the Kurdish poor, and the movement-party framework better captures the HDP's linkages with and articulations among the upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments.

In the third chapter, I will depict the descriptive statistics on the Kurdish population in Bağcılar and Istanbul by using the KONDA dataset. In this chapter, I will compare the demographic, social, cultural, political and economic patterns between the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in the local and urban contexts. In the fourth chapter, I will conduct logistic regression estimation on the Kurdish samples of Bağcılar and Istanbul drawn from the KONDA dataset to test the relevance of class-voting among the Kurdish electorate. I will statistically show that the Kurdish lower-classes are more likely to support the AKP and the Kurdish upper-classes are more likely to support the HDP in local and urban levels.

In the fifth and sixth chapters, by turning the perspective upside down, I will discuss the most effective organizational linkages and political articulations of the AKP and HDP among the Kurdish electorate. For this part, I will use three levels of analysis –resource mobilization, space-making, and identity/cultural frames– and show the similarities and differences between the linkages and articulations of the clientelist machine party and the contentious movement-party on the ground.

CHAPTER 2

THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY BUILDING

2.1 Introduction

This dissertation research has two dimensions: the first dimension involves the class-based determinants of Kurdish voting behavior, and the second dimension involves clientelistic-machine and contentious-movement linkages of these two parties among Kurdish voters. For the first dimension, I will respectively review the available literatures on the cleavage voting; class-based cleavages at the global level; and socioeconomic cleavages, class-based voting and the Kurdish voting behavior in Turkey. For the second dimension, I will survey the clietentelist-machine party and movement-party literature. Although there a lot of studies on the "Kurdish issue" and "Kurdish movement" from a macro perspective in Turkey, there is less attention on the Kurdish voting behavior and political mobilizations of the Kurdish people in the urban context.[29] Besides, on account of the exclusive focus the ethnicity-nationalism-identity nexus, the class dimension is almost missing in the existing studies. It is necessary to underline that the multiple trajectories within neoliberal-capitalist relations, which involve proletarianization to a large extent as well as upward mobility to a limited extent, have made political decisions and mobilizations of Kurdish electorate in Istanbul a quite complex issue.

In general, the global literature on voting behavior and political parties revolve around two particular themes: the influence of some prominent cleavages, such as class, religion/religiosity, identity and culture/values, and the relevance of

[29] For some exemplary studies on the Kurdish issue and movement in the last decade, see Casier and Jorgenden (2011), Jorgenden and Akkaya (2012), Akkaya and Jorgenden (2012), Güneş (2013b), Yeğen (2016).

programmatic, clientelist and symbolic (charismatic, personalist, patrimonial, etc.) party-voter linkages (Kitschelt, 2006; Roberts, 2014). Quite similarly, the existing literature on voting behavior in Turkey predominantly focus on the influence of social, cultural (i.e. primarily identity-based) and economic cleavages, and there are a few (recent) studies addressing the party-voter linkages among the electorate.[30] In Turkey, there is limited literature on the "Kurdish" voting behavior and corresponding party strategies from a micro perspective. My dissertation aims to fill this gap by particularly focusing on Kurdish voters.

Prior to the literature review, at this juncture, it is necessary to reiterate that there are reciprocal relationships between cleavages, linkages and articulations. While the cleavages shape the voters' attitudes towards politics and determine their preferences of parties to some extent, political parties actively construct and articulate such divisions for strengthening their mobilization. Roberts (2014) states that

> Linkages are the appeals and interactive connections that parties employ to attract individual or group support, thus providing a basis for partisan identification. Cleavages are axes of competition that divide the electorate and structure partisan rivalries. Strong linkages, therefore, create loyal adherents who are less likely to abandon their party; sharp cleavages create well-marked boundaries and deep divides that voters are unlikely to cross (p. 20).

Similar to linkages, political parties make use of various frames, discourses and intermediary mechanisms, which can be overall labelled as "political articulations" (in following the footsteps of Gramsci, Althusser and Laclau), for

[30] In the following section I will argue the prominent voting cleavages in Turkey. While some of them (such as center vs. periphery, secularism vs. Islam) have become persistent and been referred by political elites, some have turned to be obsolete (such as modern vs. traditional, rural vs. urban) in the recent decades in Turkey. For some exceptional examples that investigates the party-voter linkages on the ground in Turkey, see White (2002), De Leon et al. (2009), Arıkan Akdağ (2014), Tugal (2015), Ark-Yıldırım (2017), Yıldırım (2017).

mobilizing and consolidating their electorate. De Leon, Desai and Tugal (2009) define the relationship between political articulations and cleavages as follows:

> [P]olitical articulation [is] the process through which party practices naturalize class, ethnic, and racial formations as a basis of social division by integrating disparate interests and identities into coherent sociopolitical blocks. Cleavages, therefore, are only the possible differences among actors who populate the social; they do not naturally carry a political valence, but maybe deployed by parties to aggregate majorities (pp.194-195).

The organization of this literature review chapter is as follows: First, I will discuss the cleavage voting in general. Second, I will overview the relevant cleavages and electoral behavior in Turkey. Third, I will review the literature on the Kurdish voting behavior in Turkey. Fourth, I will provide an overview of the machine party and the movement party literature and situate the AKP and the HDP respectively in these literatures. In this section, I will begin discussion with the defining features of the clientelist machine parties – such as the relational clientelism, problem-solving networks, locally-embedded multi-tasking brokers – and then continue discussing the defining features of the contemporary movement parties – such as the relative deprivation and communal grievances, spatial strategies, resources mobilization, middle-class support and cultural (or intellectual) capital.

2.2. Cleavage voting

Cleavages can be defined as social, economic, cultural and geographical divisions in electoral patterns. For instance, economic class, social status, and cultural values are considered as divisions that explain voters' tendencies to political preferences and party choice. To be more precise, in the current literature, gender, age, ethnicity, language, rural and urban residence, geographic location, social class, education, income, employment sector, occupational status, ideology, identity, religiosity, regionalism, nationalism, and cultural values constitute some significant cleavages,

which in turn shape electoral patterns.[31] The establishment of cleavage voting is contingent upon local and global historical trajectories, such that, in the post-war period, working-classes used to vote for socialist, social democratic and communist (overall, left-wing) parties in Western Europe, which then facilitated the formation of the European welfare system.[32]

In a pioneering study on cleavage voting, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) asserted that party systems froze over time and thereby, the traditional social cleavages – center vs. periphery, religious vs. secular, urban vs. rural, capital vs. labor– determined party preferences in Western Europe. Following this leading study, for a long time, political scientists have tackled socioeconomic status, religiosity patterns, and urbanity-rurality as the most salient cleavages. For example, in the American context, it is generally assumed that lower classes are more likely to support the Democrats (liberals), while upper classes are more likely to support the Republicans (conservatives) (Paradowski & Flynn, 2015). Marxist perspectives in political sociology often contend that while working-class tend to support the leftist parties, the bourgeoisie-or-capitalist class tend to support the conservative and right-wing parties, because these parties respectively represent their material (or economic) interests (Callinicos & Harman, 1989; Achterberg & Houtman, 2006).

However, starting from the 1970s onwards, Lipset and his followers have discussed the decline of class-based cleavages (and material interests) in the 'post-

[31] In the voting behavior literature, there are three popular schools of thought with regard to cleavages. First, the sociological approach of the Columbia School which emerged in the 1940s and 1950s emphasizes the role of groups and group membership such as religious, workplace, social ties in voting decisions. Second, the Michigan School, which is also known for its social psychology approach and became dominant in the 1960s, highlights the significance of partisan identification on electoral choice. Last but not least, the economic model underlines the importance of income and economic self-interest in explaining voting behavior (for a review of three schools, see Manza and Brooks 1999).

[32] There are traditional indices for measuring working-class voting for leftist parties. For example, Alford index of class voting = % manual workers voting for left parties - % nonmanual workers voting for the same left parties (Manza and Brooks 2008).

industrial societies,' the term which was coined by sociologist Daniel Bell in 1974. In this period, the relevance of class and other socio-economic cleavages on voting behavior began to be questioned. Especially with the cultural turn and domination of postmodern discourses in academia, "traditional social cleavages" have lost their influence in the analysis of voting behavior in advanced capitalist countries (Inglehart, 1977; Inglehart & Norris, 2004). It is especially necessary to mention "the post-materialism paradigm," which in basic terms claims that material affluence in the advanced industrial societies led to the rise of (postmodern) identity issues and cultural values, such as individual freedom, self-expression and life-style. Instead of materialist-structuralist concerns, researchers argued that identities, beliefs, spiritual issues, cultural values, and lifestyles began to be more effective in explaining voting behavior. It is likely to argue that the postmodern identity perspectives surpassed the class-based analysis of voting with the neoliberal turn from the late 1970s onwards.

The idea that the "traditional social cleavages" that stabilizes electoral patterns in welfare capitalism between the 1940s and 1970s no longer determine the voting behavior in post-industrial societies has been referred to as the "new conventional wisdom" (Clark & Lipset, 2001; Elff, 2007; Paradowski & Flynn, 2015, Lillemets, 2015, p. 18). Along with this conventional wisdom, some commentators argued that the secularization process in advanced capitalist countries have rendered the traditional religiosity cleavage irrelevant, as it seemed that the religious identities and practices have lost their significance in most surveys (Inglehart and Norris, 2004). It was argued that neither class nor religion were explanatory variables on voting behavior (Lillemets, 2015, p. 19). After all, the repercussions of neoliberalization and secularization processes, which were articulated through diverse postmodern discourses such as "individualized society," "the death of class,"

“the secular age”, “the erosion of collectivities”, were not only reflected into political studies but dominated all disciplines of social sciences in this period in the developed countries (Rogers-Vaughn, 2016).

Against the new conventional wisdom, which tells us the class-based voting has severely declined in advanced industrial countries in the second half of the last century, many studies attract attention to the continuing significance of class voting in contemporary democracies (Evans, 2000; Langsæther, 2019). Examining the cross-national data from six Western countries, Brooks et al. (2006) argue that there is little evidence on the universal decline of class cleavage. Some commentators suggest that the arguments on the erosion of the traditional social cleavages (class and religiosity) are an exaggeration (Elff, 2007). From a comparative perspective, some studies reveal that, first, there is a positive correlation between the income/wealth levels and voting turnout, and second, an increase in income/wealth level is likely to increase the rightist-or-conservative vote (Paradowski and Flynn, 2015). Some scholars of American politics argue that there is a clear influence of income on voter turnout as well as voting behavior, even after controlling for other class-based factors (Huber and Stanig, 2007). Therefore, socioeconomic status (or class-based factors) does not only shape individual political preferences in the electoral spectrum from left to right but often have direct influence on political participation, representation and voter turnout. In specific terms, poor and working-class populations often abstain from voting and are likely to be underrepresented. For instance, apart from legal-institutional barriers, low political participation rates of poor Latino migrants in the US can be attributed to their lower socioeconomic status (Logan Darrah and Sookhe, 2012). In contrast to poor migrants, better-off migrants who are already rooted in local context and have gained social and economic capital

are more likely to participate in politics. Manza and Brooks (2008) argue that "the sociodemographic attributes of individuals linked to class position, such as education, income, gender and labor force status, all contribute to subsequent class differences in turnout rates" (p. 209). In broad terms, better-off and resource-rich groups vote more often than poor-disadvantaged groups, which lead to the class bias in political participation and thus underrepresentation of the poor and working-classes (Lijphart, 1997).

The worsening of income inequality on the global scale in the neoliberal era (from the late 1970s onwards) once again has attracted attention to the significance of class politics, and hence, class cleavages on voting behavior. In this period, with the intensifying globalization processes and the massive rural-to-urban migrations, poor populations living in urban areas, most of whom were transformed into the informal proletariat, have become the focus of both the rightist- and leftist-populist parties all around the world. After the 2008 global crisis, Marx's conceptualization of capitalist crisis, class struggle and relationships between the capitalist elites and poor working-class began to be debated widely in public (Harman, 2010). Current studies underline the continuing significance of class on voting behavior in Western Europe and the US (Ellff, 2007; Manza & Brooks, 2008; Lillemeths, 2015; Paradowski & Flynn, 2015). Although there is some empirical evidence for the decline of the class-based voting pattern in some Western countries, this is not applicable to all countries and region(s) (Elff, 2007). A recent statistical analysis shows that political preferences of European electorate for the traditional as well as the new left and new right (far-right) parties are still influenced by the class-based factors, involving income and education, along with the cultural values and attitudes (van der Berg & Coffe, 2012).

Nonetheless, it is also necessary to admit that class-based voting is not uniform today, as it used to be in the past. It was indeed quite easy to argue that 50 years ago the working-classes predominantly voted for the social democrats and socialist parties in Europe, but recently there is an emerging trend of the rise of far-right and ultra-nationalist parties attracting the votes of lower classes in Western countries. Due to their conservative-nationalist articulations vis-à-vis the widespread anti-immigration sentiments, poor and working-classes have begun to vote for the rightist-populist parties that do not represent their class interests (Achterberg and Houtman, 2006). According to Fraser (2017), "the new (right-wing) populist movements are composed of exactly those resentful groups [i.e. unemployed workers, small-scale entrepreneurs who went bankrupt, dispossessed populations and urban poor] which suffered from neoliberal policies, were excluded from institutional politics yet were unable to express themselves within the new (middle class) social movements" (cited in Küçük & Türkmen, 2020, p. 5). While poor and working-classes in many developed countries support the new right or the neo-populist/far-right parties, middle-classes support the new left parties that favor redistribution issues. Some explain this contradiction with the dominance of "the second political dimension," such as moral values, religious and ethnic identity, which distract the poor's attention away from redistributive politics (Huber & Stanig, 2007).[33] Through the second-dimension, the poor and working class might opt for the rightist/conservative parties, which are indeed against redistributive policies, instead of leftist parties, which defend redistributive policies. At this juncture, it is necessary

[33] "[P]olitics is multi-dimensional, and voters are often forced to make trade-offs across the dimensions. Thus, if the preferences of poor voters on economic policy are less important to them than are their preferences on some other dimension -such as race and religion- the poor voters might vote against their economic preferences in favor of these second dimension preferences" (Huber & Stanig 2007, p. 11).

to remember that the rise of second-dimension does not necessarily imply the decline of class-cleavage. This might reflect the role of intermediary mechanisms –values and ideologies– in mediating the impact of class-based factors on voting behavior.

It is necessary to remark that in contrast to their previous arguments on the decline of the traditional cleavages, scholars sometimes have updated their arguments in the 2000s. For instance, Inglehart has adjusted his earlier argument about the dominance of post-materialist (cultural) values and developed "the existential insecurity" framework, which puts emphasis on the material-survival issues (Inglehart, 1977; Inglehart & Norris, 2004). Contrary to the generalized secularization trend in the post-materialist societies, religiosity and material survival factors continue to be very important for poor countries and communities (Inglehart & Norris, 2004). Accordingly, while wealthy countries and communities adopt post-material values and move towards the secular orientations, those poor nations and deprived populations have still insisted on religious values (such as "fate" and "destiny") because of their feeling of insecurity towards future risks. The religiosity in this respect becomes a medium for the articulation of class-based concerns for the poor. By tracing the existential insecurity argument, one may argue that traditional cleavages (class and religiosity) persist, and class and religiosity intermingle with each other. After all, we should treat the arguments on the declining significance of the class cleavage (and maybe other traditional cleavages) with caution, and we need to reconsider the intermediation of "second dimensions," such as religiosity, conservatism, and nationalism, between class and political preference.

2.3 Voting behavior in Turkey

Similar to the traditional social cleavage between bourgeoisie/elites and working-class/poor masses, Mardin's (1973) seminal work on the long historical divide between "the center" and "the periphery" was the first study that addresses the political-sociological landscape in Turkey. In this study, Mardin argues that "the center" refers to bureaucrats, state-elites and other official actors, whereas "the periphery" denotes "primordial groups," peasantry and local/provincial populations (and sometimes "local notables") with regard to the Ottoman-Turkish modernization experience (p. 174).[34]

Following the footsteps of Mardin, the mainstream analysis of Turkish politics construed the transition from the Kemalist single-party regime to the competitive electoral system with the electoral victory of the Democrat Party in the 1950s as the first move of the periphery against the center. With the advent of Islamists and Kurds in the political arena, Mardin's basic model has been widely discussed in the 1990s. Accordingly, many accounts argued the contrasting features between the center (modern, laicist, etatist, educated urban elites) and the periphery (traditional, religious, conservative, rural and uneducated provincial populations) determined the contours of the political landscape in Turkey (Göle, 1996; Yavuz, 2003). In this period, electoral studies underlined that the leftist-secularist parties at the center (e.g. CHP) have urban, educated, secular, and mostly ethnically-homogenous electorate, whereas the peripheral pro-Islamist and pro-Kurdish parties have rural-based, undereducated, highly-religious and ethnically-mixed constituents (Çarkoğlu, 2012).

[34] "This social cleavage was primarily a cultural one differentiating the ruling elites of the center from the subjects of the periphery. The center's reactionary strategy towards the periphery was guided primarily by its self-confident cultural superiority that provides a moral basis for its deep-rooted suspicion about the peripheral forces" (Aytaç and Çarkoğlu, 2015, p. 3).

Following the center-periphery cleavage, the identity politics between Islamists and secularists vis-à-vis the critique of Kemalist modernization dominated the academic field in the 1990s (Bozdoğan & Kasaba, 1997). Likewise, in the following period, "democracy," "multiculturalism" and "civil society" were exhaustively discussed in the liberal academic circles of Turkey to glorify the political mobilization of the pro-Islamist parties (RP, SP, FP and AKP) among the urban poor, ethnic and religious minorities and those other groups excluded from the *ancien régime*.[35] Focusing on the practices of the RP in the 1990s and the AKP in the 2000s, many scholars argued that poor religious-conservative masses have been mobilized towards the center, which is apparently against the interests of the established elites (Çağlar, 2012; White, 2002; Turam, 2007).

Before moving on with the discussion of cleavages that designate the contours of contemporary politics in Turkey, it may be helpful to review the Turkish party system briefly. First, it is necessary to underline that the frequent military interventions (1960, 1970, 1980) severely impaired the evolution of democracy and the party system, and secondly, the military tutelage limited the possibilities of democratic consolidation for a long time in Turkey (Özbudun, 2000). From the 1960s onwards, the military governments made use of the rightist parties, Islamic movements, and contra-guerilla organizations to manage "the communist threat" and discipline the leftist mobilization (Yaşlı, 2016). The leftist awakening was harshly repressed and revolutionary movements were seriously punished by the military regimes in the 1970s and 1980s (Yaşlı, 2016). Moreover, almost all major political parties in Turkey were plagued with "high degree of personalism," such that the names of Ecevit, Erbakan, Demirel and Türkeş were identified with specific political

[35] For some exemplary liberal academic accounts glorfying the rise of pro-Islamist AKP, see Öniş and Keyman (2003), and Keyman (2007).

tendencies in Turkey (Özbudun, 2000, p. 83). The leader cult often overshadowed the significance of party politics, as it is the party leaders who autocratically decided the candidates for elections. Furthermore, especially from 1970s onwards, volatility, factionalism, fragmentation, and ideological polarization marked the Turkish party system and led to institutional decay (Özbudun, 2000). Two extremist parties, pro-Islamist MSP and ultra-nationalist MHP, gained representation in the parliament in the 1970s and dramatically changed the party system. Likewise, party system once again became fragmented in the 1990s: ANAP and DYP occupied the center-right, DSP and CHP were positioned at the center-left. In the early 1990s, the first pro-Kurdish political parties were also founded and were represented in the Turkish parliament. The weakening of central-right and central-left tendencies in this period paved the way for the strengthening of extreme right parties – i.e. RP and MHP (Özbudun, 2000). In 1994 and 1995, the pro-Islamist RP, heir to the MSP, became the leading party in elections. Turkish secularists predominantly interpreted the electoral victory of RP as the revival of Islamic reactionism ("*irtica*"), while others despised the RP for being the representative of "peasant-migrants" who had not yet become urbanites.[36] Nevertheless, some studies properly attributed the RP's mobilization among the poor populations to its strong grassroots networks and local organizations in urban peripheries (White, 2002).

In the 1990s, the popular Islamism and secularism issues along with the ethnicity issue designated the political agenda of the country. Focusing on these issues, Kalaycıoğlu (1994) was the pioneering researcher in applying Mardin's

[36] With an apparent modernist perspective, Tachau (2000) argues that "[w]hereas earlier on it seemed that peasants were being assimilated into urban society, if imperfectly, it now appears that the sheer numbers of urban ex-villagers are overwhelming cities, not only in terms of demands for basic services, but also politically. No doubt this explains why the Islamist WP was able to capture the mayoralties of the two largest cities, Istanbul and Ankara, in the 1994 local elections." (p. 143)

center-periphery framework to political preferences in Turkey. By using religiosity as the primary indicator of center-periphery cleavage (high religiosity denotes "periphery," low religiosity denotes "center"), he confirmed this cleavage significantly influenced the party preferences of the Turkish electorate. In the 1990s, along with religiosity, some distinctive characteristics that were attributed to "peripheral identity" are the support for free-market economy (as opposed to government-controlled economy), pro-civil-society attitude (as opposed to strong-state tradition) and traditional family structure (as opposed to the modern nuclear family) (Çarkoğlu, 1998; Kıbrıs, 2010, p. 226). It is possible to maintain that the significant cleavages of Turkey in the 1990s are secularism vs Islam, pro-Western orientation vs nationalism, universalism vs localism, traditionalism vs modernism, urbanity vs rurality, civil society vs the strong state, market-economy vs state-intervention, Sunnism vs Alevism (Kalaycıoğlu, 1994, 1999; Secor, 2001; Esmer, 1995, 2002). In this period, the identity-and-ideology-based cleavages overshadowed the class-based cleavages in electoral studies. There are only a few studies in this period that address the economic voting. For instance, Çarkoğlu (1997) investigated to what extent the macro-economic performance of the governing party influences its incumbency in the elections.

For the early 2000s, the two prominent voting models -spatial analysis and Michigan voting approach- were used to analyze the voting behavior in Turkey (Çarkoğlu, 2012). While the former emphasizes the short-term ideological issues that shape the electoral geography, the latter prioritizes sociological approach and long-term partisan identifications. Çarkoğlu and Hinich (2006) depicted the issue space in Turkey in 2001, one year prior to the 2002 general elections that brought the AKP into power, as follows: On the one hand, the traditional divide between right and left,

where rightists and pro-Islamists oppose leftists and secularists; and on the other hand, pro-EU public attitudes vs Euroscepticism-and-Turkish-nationalism. Çarkoğlu (2012) contended that the parameters of the Michigan voting are the turban ban, the attitudes toward military tutelage, the Turkish nationalism, the public status of religion, the attitudes towards the EU membership (pp. 161-162).

The pro-Islamist AKP came to power in 2002 and then turned into a "dominant party" with its almost two-decades-long uninterrupted "electoral hegemony" (Keyman, 2014). Prior to the AKP governments, one of the main characteristics of the Turkish party system was a high degree of volatility and fragmentation, and coalition governments. With the electoral hegemony of AKP governments in the 2000s and 2010s, the era of volatility and fragmentation has ended (Özbudun, 2000; Tezcür, 2012; Keyman, 2014). Due to the profound impact of the 2001 economic crisis, many accounts underline the role of economic voting in explaining the AKP's rise to power (Çarkoğlu, 2008, 2011; Başlevent et al., 2005, 2009). However, others argue that the AKP's attempts for democratization vis-à-vis the Kemalist bureaucracy and military are as significant as the party's economic performance.

Many reasons have been cited for the electoral success of the AKP. Some argued that with its opposition to Kemalist-militarist tutelage, the AKP became popular in a short period among religious-conservative masses (Öniş, 2013). In the early 2000s, the AKP governments proposed a series of democratic reforms to satisfy the criteria of the EU accession process. This democratization attracted different electoral segments. Turkish liberals, Kurds, and other minorities enthusiastically supported AKP to eradicate militarist tutelage over politics (Bechev, 2011). It is necessary to note that especially Turkish liberals in the media and academia praised

the AKP's "conservative democrat identity" and its "Muslim democratic" (or "moderate-Islamist") model in this period (Hale & Özbudun, 2010; Bechev 2011, Aladağ, 2013). Some others attributed the success of AKP to its religious-value attachments as well as great performance with respect to the economy and social policies in the 2000s (Gidengil & Karakoç, 2016). By implicitly or explicitly employing Islamic values, the AKP has been able to mobilize religious-conservative masses in urban peripheries. However, others claimed that the AKP's electoral success cannot be explained only with the religiosity cleavage (or in reference to Islamist ideology), but it is necessary to understand its bottom-up mobilization strategy (Doğan, 2016). Similar to the RP, the AKP has been known with its strong organizations and extensive network brokers who conduct door-to-door campaigns at the local level.

Kalaycıoğlu (2011) underlined the fact that the center-periphery cleavage has resurfaced in the 2000s with the electoral differentiation between the secular coastal regions that vote for the CHP and the religious-conservative hinterland (i.e. provincial and peripheral areas) that vote for the AKP. This spatial dualization has also a class dimension: the central-coastal areas are wealthy, whereas the peripheral-provincial areas are poor. In analyzing the results of parliamentary elections in the 2000s, Tezcür (2012) confirms that the electoral regionalization pattern overlapped with the center-periphery cleavage at the national level. Accordingly, there are, at least, three specific electoral regions: AKP dominated central Anatolian provinces, CHP dominated western and southern provinces, and (pro-Kurdish) BDP dominated Kurdish populated eastern and southeastern provinces in Turkey. Likewise, this regionalization pattern can be also observed in the electoral differentiation between the central and peripheral districts-neighborhoods in the metropolises of Turkey.

Ataç and Işık (2013) disclosed that in most metropolitan areas of Turkey, spatial differentiation in terms of socioeconomic status overlap with political preferences. There is a correspondence between the spatial stratification of classes and their political preferences in the urban setting. In Istanbul, high-income groups reside in central-coastal areas, low-income groups reside in inner-peripheral areas, and middle-income groups reside in between the two margins. Looking at the 2016 presidential system referendum, Aytaç et al. (2017) suggest that the center-periphery cleavage, as well as partisanship, becomes relevant in explaining the electoral geography in Turkey.

In explaining the AKP's continuing electoral hegemony, some factors come to the forefront at the expense of others in the current literature – these are ideological distinction, party identification and partisanship, and lastly, economic satisfaction (Kalaycıoğlu, 2010, 2011, 2014). Despite some contrary claims, the economic voting hypothesis is still valid in the case of the AKP (Başlevent et al., 2005, 2009, 2016). The economic voting hypothesis contends that, firstly, the economic performance of the incumbent party influences its chances of re-election, and secondly, the voters' perception of economic conditions has a considerable impact on their party preference. There are several distinctive features of economic voting that need to be highlighted. While the voting behavior of working-classes mainly depend on low unemployment and low inflation rates (and recently, easy access to credits from private banks), which would increase their real wages and promote their subsistence strategies, the upper-class voters (the capitalist class) prefer the investment-friendly economic environment with low-interest rates. Hibbs (1987) argued that the "[w]orking class voters prefer economic outcomes in which

unemployment is low, whereas middle-class voters prefer a low inflation environment" (cited in Manza Brooks, 2008, p. 204).

In analyzing the 2007 general election results, Çarkoğlu (2008) argues that AKP's electoral success depended on favorable global economic conditions and the high (GDP) growth performance. He suggests that economic pragmatism became more significant for AKP voters than ideological attachments. Economic pragmatism argument implies that different classes and class segments care about their material interests, act rationally, and vote accordingly. In a similar vein, Kalaycıoğlu (2017) suggested that economic voting emerged as the dominant factor in explaining the results of the general elections of June 2015. He further argued that the economic issues along with the security concerns became relevant in the restoration of the AKP power in the general elections of November 2015.

It is easy to explain the rise of AKP to power in the post-2001 economic crisis period with the economic voting hypothesis. Those voters who became discontent with the existing parties supported the new parties – the AKP and Genç Party in 2002 general elections. Especially in its early periods, the AKP executed the neoliberal policies suggested by the IMF and was able to persuade both the businesspeople and the urban poor (Tugal, 2009; Marschall et al., 2016, p. 201). With high growth rates, low inflation, and huge financial inflows (mainly, foreign direct investment) between 2002 and 2008, the party attracted all segments of the society (informal or subproletariat, working-class, middle-class and bourgeoisie). However, the Turkish economy experienced the repercussions of the 2008 global financial crisis through rising inflation and unemployment rates (above 20 percent in 2009), but AKP's electoral support among the poor electorate has not seriously dropped. The AKP governments have recently faced with the stagflation

phenomenon (Eğilmez, 2018, 2020). The favorable global economic conditions have reversed in the 2010s; almost all local currencies of the developing countries depreciated against the dollar and the foreign direct investment flowing to the emerging markets have considerably slowed down.

In this context, it seems puzzling to see that, despite the dramatic unemployment problem (above 10 percent), decreasing purchasing power of the households (because of the higher inflation rates), devastating credit card debt of households, which is accompanied with the huge debt burden of the private sector and increasing public deficits, the AKP continues to hold power with modest declines in its voting share in the 2010s. This fact may cast doubt on the rationality and (economic) pragmatism axioms and relevance of economic voting hypothesis in Turkey. One might think that the second-dimension issues –such as religiosity, nationalism, and other cultural cleavages– have resurfaced and overshadowed the "rational" economic voting in the 2010s. Nonetheless, I argue that this puzzle (i.e. continuing support of the poor for the AKP in the context of deteriorating economy) supports my main hypothesis on the AKP's relational clientelism. The party continues to compensate actual and potential economic losses of its poor electorate from the (formal) market relations through informal ways – Islamic solidarity and charity and privately-funded social assistance. The resources provided by the pro-AKP businessmen, *tariqats* and Islamic communities to the poor are very important. Despite some seeming inconsistencies in economic voting, the AKP still has tangible resources, intermediaries, and supporters for maintaining its urban political machines among the poor voters. Lastly, it is necessary to keep in mind that main economic indicators (such as per capita GDP, inflation and unemployment) are still better compared to the 1990s, and the Turkish economy has managed to perform slightly

above other emerging markets' average for the last 10 years – i.e. between the global financial crisis in 2008 and the local currency and debt crisis in 2018.

Along with the materialist linkages, the AKP's machine politics is fueled by the "populist antagonism between the people versus the elites" (Yabancı, 2016). The party has been able to persuade the poor religious-conservative voters by creating antagonisms and tensions at the national and local levels. Despite the dissolution of the center-periphery cleavage with the upward mobility of Islamists and marginalization of Kemalists, AKP continues to frame itself as the representative of poor masses against the secularist Kemalist elites. With its class-based and identity-based connotations, the anti-elitist discourse works for the AKP in garnering the support of poor religious-conservative segments and in consolidating its hegemony. In parallel with this strategy, the AKP's has recently begun to use "the national will" ("*milli irade*") discourse, which becomes the main signifier of its "authoritarian populism" in the face of political turmoil and economic crisis, as the party successfully disseminates "the national will" discourse to suppress its dissident voices. Today, neither the opposition parties nor contentious movements are able to construct alternative political frames; it is the AKP that determines the limits of political space and the rules of "the only game in town."

Although many studies refer to the populist characteristics of the AKP, there is scarce literature on how AKP constructs active consent among the poor and working-class on the ground. I will explore the party's actual mobilization strategies among the Kurdish poor and working-class at the local level. In the following section, I will specifically sketch the contours of Kurdish voting behavior in Turkey.

2.4 Kurdish voting behavior

It is a well-known phenomenon that the Kurdish electorate predominantly support two parties –AKP and HDP– in Turkey in the 2010s (Grigoriadis, 2016; Yeğen et al., 2016). Before the hegemony of the AKP, Kurdish voters mostly supported the pro-Kurdish parties –along with some support for rightist and pro-Islamists– in the 1990s (Sayarı & Esmer, 2002). From the early 1990s onwards, pro-Kurdish parties received tremendous electoral support (from the poor Kurdish peasants) in the Kurdish populated provinces in the eastern and southeastern region and represented a significant portion of the Kurdish population in the peripheries of metropolitan areas. These pro-Kurdish parties are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Pro-Kurdish parties from past to present

HEP	1990-1993
ÖZDEP	1992-1993
DEP	1993-1994
HADEP	1994-2003
DEHAP	1997 -2005
DTP	2005-2009
BDP	2008-2014
HDP	2012-today

Source: Kamer (2018)

Despite the legalization of the Kurdish movement with the development of pro-Kurdish political parties, the illegal wing of the Kurdish movement –namely, the PKK– continued to be very influential on the political decisions of Kurdish people. However, contrary to the radical demands of the PKK, first for secession and then for autonomy, most of the pro-Kurdish parties instead have defended parliamentarian democracy, human rights, peace, and negotiation starting from the 1990s onwards.

Although pro-Kurdish parties were founded in the early 1990s, they were not allowed to compete in the parliamentary elections due to the legal restrictions. Series of pro-Kurdish parties were banned by the Turkish Constitutional Court on the

grounds of "separatism" and threatening "the national security" in the 1990s and 2000s, as the Kemalist-militarist authorities perceived the pro-Kurdish parties as a serious threat (Koğacıoğlu, 2004; Öniş, 2013). Besides, although these parties dominated the Kurdish majority provinces, their representation at the national level was restricted because of the electoral system in Turkey, which has a 10 percent national threshold for a political party to be represented in the parliament. In spite of the threshold and the strict measures, one could posit that the pro-Kurdish parties achieved becoming contesting actors in Turkish politics in the 1990s. HADEP, for instance, was "the only party capable of restraining the growth of the Islamist Welfare Party in Turkey's primarily Kurdish south-eastern provinces" in this period (Barkey, 1998, p. 129). Furthermore, the pro-Kurdish parties not only represented Kurdish voters but also became safe haven for contentious movements and the revolutionary leftist actors.

Founded in 2005, DTP entered the 2007 parliamentary elections as part of the leftist coalition platform, Thousand Hope Candidates ("*Bin Umut Adayları"*) (Kamer, 2018). Bypassing the 10 percent electoral threshold, the independent candidates then formed the DTP group in the parliament, which successfully represented both Kurdish and leftist electorate with the 22 deputies in the Turkish parliament between 2007 and 2009 (Kamer, 2018). When the DTP was banned in 2009, its core cadre renamed itself as BDP. In the early 2010s, BDP set a new goal of Turkeyification and re-oriented itself towards the radical left (Casier and Jorgenden, 2011). In 2011, the BDP cooperated with more than 20 socialist parties and movements to establish the Democratic Congress of Peoples' Platform (HDK). With the collective efforts on this platform, the HDP was founded in 2012 as a "new left" political party of Turkey, in which Kurds and socialists are equal partners (Yörük,

2017). In order to bypass the 10 percent threshold, Kurdish and socialist candidates independently entered the 2011 general elections, then they formed the BDP group in the parliament. Both BDP and HDP participated in the 2014 local elections. While Kurds living in the Kurdish majority southeastern and eastern provinces voted for the BDP, Turkish socialists, leftists/democrats and Kurdish electorates living in the western metropolises voted for the HDP.

There is indeed scarce literature on the reasons behind the HDP voting among the Kurdish electorate. The available literature predominantly explains the Kurdish voting for the pro-Kurdish parties in reference to the ethnic consciousness, ethnic identification and ethnonationalism (Kirişçi & Winrow, 1997; Sarıgil, 2010; Ekmekçi, 2011; Sarıgil & Fazlıoğlu, 2013). There are a few studies that emphasize the significance of collective grievances and the processes of war, violence and dispossession on the Kurdish votes towards the pro-Kurdish parties in the 1990s and the 2000s (Romano, 2006).

On the subject of Kurdish voting for the AKP (and previous pro-Islamist parties), the most cited reason is the Islamic identity (i.e. religious conservatism) of the Kurdish people in Turkey. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the famous *Naqshibendi* orders emerged and spread through traditional Kurdish *madrasahs* in the southeastern Turkey. Kurdish society has been traditionally religious and hence supported to the rightist-Islamist parties since the 1970s – respectively MSP, RP, SP and AKP (Van Bruinessen, 1992; Yeğen et al., 2016). Today, Islamic communities prevalent among the religious-conservative Kurdish electorate channel their votes towards the AKP primarily through Islamic brotherhood discourse (Günay & Yörük, 2019).

The second most-cited reason for the Kurdish support for the AKP is the party's democratization attempts vis-à-vis its de-securitization of Kurdish issue and the partial recognition of Kurdish ethnic identity in the 2000s (Daraghi, 2019). Kurds who had suffered from violence under the militarist state voted for AKP because of its anti-militarist articulations and "democratic opening" (Cizre, 2009). In this period, EU accession talks required some progressive policies for democratization and liberalization, and thereby the AKP removed the State of Emergency Rule (OHAL)[37] in the Kurdish populated provinces in eastern and southeastern Turkey, lifted the existing bans on the Kurdish language, and allowed Kurdish education and broadcasting institutions. That's why in the 2007 referendum on the presidency the pro-Kurdish DTP called Kurdish voters to support the AKP's proposal.[38] At the time, the DTP believed that Erdoğan's presidency would open space for democratization and opportunities for the Kurdish political movement (Lewitt & Çıplak, 2012).

Another notable argument on the Kurdish support for AKP is that the party attracts poor Kurdish electorate with the promise of redistribution politics, involving social assistance and handouts, such as food, fuel, shelter and jobs (Yörük, 2013; Günay & Yörük, 2019). This argument is based on the fact that AKP has had a relatively better performance in the area of social policies compared to the previous governments and compensated the perils of neoliberal capitalism by incorporating

[37] OHAL refers to ("*Olağanüstü Hal"*) the State of Emergency Rule in Turkey. In the Kurdish populated eastern and southeastern Turkey, Turkish government declared OHAL "to fight against terrorism" in 1987. Extended several times, the AKP removed the OHAL regime permanently in 2002.
[38] With the end of Ahmet Necdet Sezer's presidential term in 2007, a political debate on presidency had risen. The pro-Islamist Abdullah Gül was proposed as the next president by the AKP, but he did not maintain the required vote share. This incident was accompanied the *Cumhuriyet* meetings in which the presidential candidacy of the Islamist figure was protested by thousands of secular people. Afterwards, a reactionary memorandum, *e-muhtıra*, was issued by the Turkish military, which stated its preference for a secular candidate for presidency. This was an instance of the military's tutelary power over politics. In response, the AKP proposed to hold a referendum on legislative amendment for election of president by people. In the 2007 referendum, this change was accepted with 69 percent "yes" votes.

the previously excluded segments (informal proletariat) into the welfare system. The AKP extended the scope of social assistance programs and reached the Kurdish poor living in the urban areas as well.

In recent years some quantitative studies on Kurdish voting behavior have been published (Sarıgil, 2010; Ekmekçi, 2011; Sarıgil & Fazlıoğlu, 2013). It is because various surveys and datasets on the subject have become available for researchers. Some surveys that include information about Kurdish political preferences are those of KONDA, SAMER,[39] TEPAV,[40] and World Values Surveys (WVS). While the former three directly address an ethnicity question, the last one specifies Kurdish ethnicity through the proxies of "birthplace" and "language." In addition to these datasets, some researchers collected their own data through medium-scale surveys. While some of the empirical studies focus directly on the determining factors behind Kurdish voting behavior, others involve the political-economic implications of Kurdish voting.

I will begin with a recent survey by the SAMER (2015) reporting the socioeconomic profiles and political preferences of Kurdish voters and review other quantitative studies on the Kurdish voting behavior. The SAMER report provides rich empirical data to understand the voting behavior and (relative) class positions of the Kurdish electorate in the metropolitan areas. The SAMER carried a medium-scale survey with a total of 3,944 people, including 2,574 respondents from Istanbul and 1370 respondents from Izmir between 23 November and 7 December 2014. From this sample, it is estimated that 16.98 percent of the total population in Istanbul and 11.39 percent of the total population in İzmir are Kurdish. This report shows that

[39] The Political and Social Research Center in Turkey
[40] The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey

Kurds are more disadvantaged in socioeconomic terms than Turks in the urban context – see Figure 7. According to the SAMER, while the upper-and-middle class is 35 percent in the Turkish sample, it is 28 percent in the Kurdish sample. The percentages of working-class and precariat are higher in the Kurdish sample than the Turkish sample – respectively 73 percent and 62 percent. The SAMER report reveals that there is a clear discrimination against Kurds in terms of wages in Turkey's labor market. While the average monthly income of non-Kurds (i.e. mostly Turks) is 1,644 TL, the average salary of Kurds is 1,487 TL in 2014. Furthermore, average income of the two specific Kurdish groups –the veiled Kurdish women and the Kurdish Alevis– are much worse compared to other groups.

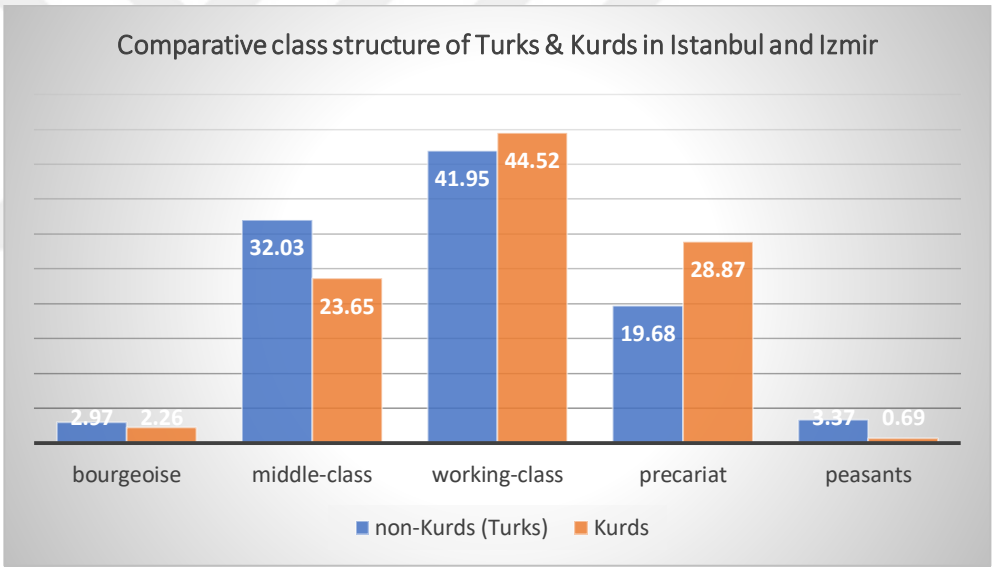

Fig. 7 Class Structure of Turks and Kurds in the metropolises, SAMER (2015)

In addition to ethnicity and class questions, the respondents were asked whom they will vote for in the 2014 local elections of Istanbul and Izmir metropolitan municipalities in the SAMER survey. The statistical analysis shows that AKP's candidate Kadir Topbaş is more likely get votes from the lower classes, HDP's candidate Sırrı Süreyya Önder from middle-and-lower classes, and CHP's candidate Mustafa Sarıgül from middle-and-upper classes. This finding suggests that the AKP's Kurdish electorate consist of lower classes, whereas the HDP's Kurdish

electorate involve middle and lower classes. It is surprising to see that while the HDP enters into competition with the AKP for the lower-class voters, HDP competes with CHP for the middle-classes in the urban context.

Another question in the SAMER survey is what the respondents think about the welfare level of their own households and the general welfare level (macroeconomic performance) of the country in the last five years. AKP voters thought that both their households' and Turkey's general welfare had improved, CHP voters thought that both had deteriorated, HDP voters thought that their own welfare had severely deteriorated whereas the country's general economy had improved. Among the poor Kurdish electorate, the ones who believed that their households' welfare and the country's general economy had improved voted for AKP, and those who thought that their households' well-being and the country's economy was getting worse voted for HDP. Looking at these patterns, one might notice that there is contradiction between class positions and perceived welfare levels of Kurdish electorate because the Kurdish middle-class voters of HDP more often stated that their welfare had deteriorated. It seems that what matters for the pro-HDP Kurds is not the actual experience of deprivation but the perception of deprivation. This puzzle will be addressed through the relative deprivation framework in the ethnographic chapters in detail.

Another recent survey on the nexus of Kurdish voting, class positions and ethnic-religious identities is conducted by Yeğen et al. (2016). They estimate that there are about 12-15 million Kurdish citizens living in Turkey and roughly 20 percent of those are settled in Istanbul. The researchers conducted 1918 face-to-face interviews with Kurdish voters in 12 major provinces of the Kurdish region – Adıyaman, Ağrı, Bingöl, Batman, Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Kars, Mardin, Urfa, Şırnak,

Tunceli and Van. Examining election results in these provinces, they argue that the pro-Kurdish parties have been dominant among the Kurdish society. In contrast to SAMER's results on the metropolitan areas, the poor predominantly support the HDP, whereas the middle- and upper-classes support the AKP in the Kurdish region. Specifically, they found out that the Kurdish households having less than 1,000 TL income are more likely to support the HDP and Kurdish households having more than 2,000 TL income are more likely to support the AKP. Those households having 1,000-2,000 TL income equally support those parties. These figures are in contrast with my findings in Istanbul. While Kurdish lower classes tend to vote for the HDP in the Kurdish region, they tend to vote for the AKP in Istanbul.

Yeğen et al. (2016). indicate that the educated Kurds are more likely support the HDP and uneducated/undereducated Kurds are more likely support the AKP in the region. Below the primary school level, 49 percent supported the AKP, 43 percent supported the HDP; above the high school level, 47 percent supported the HDP, 36 percent supported the AKP (p. 21). They confirm that more religious Kurds support the AKP, whereas the less religious and secular Kurds support the HDP in the region. In comparative terms, men and youth are more likely to support the HDP, women and elderly are more likely support the AKP. Finally, this study shows that there is a direct relationship between the exposure to violence (i.e. being "victim" of war) in past and voting behavior today. While more than two-thirds of Kurdish "victims" support the HDP, more than half of the Kurdish "non-victims" support the AKP today in the region (p. 22).

In the rest of this section, I will review some quantitative studies with statistical models on Kurdish voting behavior. First and foremost, it is necessary to underscore that there is a common caveat in the following studies, because they

generally consider pro-Kurdish voting as a clear sign of "ethnonationalism" and even "secessionism." This argument might not always hold true. There are Kurds voting for BDP and HDP because of other reasons and demands, such as grievances and relative deprivation or the democratic demands, such as human rights and justice. In addition, these studies ignore the relationships between ethnicity, grievances, relative deprivation and class positions. Moreover, these studies exclusively focus on the national level and overlook local dynamics. Differing from these studies, my research is multimethod as it combines statistical and ethnographic insights to understand Kurdish voting behavior from a comparative class-based perspective; and it aims to show the local and urban dynamics together.

Bilecen's (2015) study uses the KONDA dataset and analyzes the determinants of voting for the pro-Kurdish party – i.e. BDP. He estimates the influence of ethnicity, religion and socioeconomic factors on Kurdish voting.[41] In modeling, Bilecen uses i) voting for BDP as dependent variable (*1=voting for BDP, 0= otherwise*), ii) ethnicity, religion, age, gender, education, income and region as independent variables, and iii) democracy, EU support, education, death, migration, economic loss and neighborhood as control variables. He finds out that i) religiosity is significant and decreases the likelihood of BDP voting, ii) ethnicity is significant and increases the probability of BDP voting, iii) income is significant and decreases the likelihood of BDP voting, iv) education is significant and decreases the likelihood of BDP voting, v) residing in the Kurdish region is significant and increases the likelihood of BDP voting. The estimation results on income and

[41] Bilecen handles "pro-Kurdish voting" as dependent variable and "ethnicity" as independent variable, thus his sample includes both Turkish and Kurdish sectors. In contrast, my sample only consists of Kurdish responses and I focus on the Kurdish votes for the AKP and the HDP. In addition, Bilecen is indifferent between ideational (or identity-based) and economic variables in modelling the pro-Kurdish voting. Unlike him, I use ideational factors not for explaining but controlling; my explanatory variables are the political-economic ones.

education parameters are not consistent in Bilecen's study. While Kurds with higher income are less likely to vote for BDP, Kurds with higher education are more likely to support BDP. Overall, this shows that the Kurdish electorate of BDP is relatively less religious, more educated and consist of lower classes.

In a similar vein, Sarıgil (2010) investigates the impact of religiosity and socioeconomic factors on "the Kurdish ethnonational identity" –again measured as voting for the pro-Kurdish party – by using the Turkish sample of the 4th wave of World Values Survey (WVS in 1999 and 2000). Sarıgil argues that two main policy approaches have been adopted until recently in order "to curb Kurdish ethnonationalism" in Turkey. On the one hand, "the pro-Islamic approach" employs the Islamist brotherhood discourse and asserts that religion may function as a "cement" between ethnic lines and prevent ethnic polarization. On the other hand, "the socioeconomic approach," which assumes that underdevelopment of the Kurdish region and deprivation of Kurds led to their "separatist" ethnic mobilization, suggests improving the economic conditions of Kurds in order to overcome ethnonationalism. In relation to these two approaches, Sarıgil addresses two puzzles, first, whether the Islamic values can prevent the Kurdish ethnonationalism, and second, whether an increase in socioeconomic status can deescalate the Kurdish ethnonationalism. Sarıgil applies logistic regression on the WVS sample in order to analyze the influence of the pro-Islamic and the socioeconomic approaches. For modeling, he takes the pro-Kurdish votes as dependent variable (1 = voting for HADEP, 0 = otherwise); religiosity (both belief and practice), income, and education as independent variables; and nationalism, ideology, regional attachment, gender, and age as control variables. Sarıgil finds that religiosity is not statistically significant whereas education and income parameters have a significant impact on

Kurdish ethnonationalism. An increase in education and income levels decreases the likelihood of Kurdish ethnonationalism. Departing from this finding, he argues that the socioeconomic approach, rather the pro-Islamic approach, can be used "to curb Kurdish ethnonationalism." It is necessary to underline that there are a few significant caveats in Sarıgil's study. First, theoretically speaking, the pro-Islamic and the socioeconomic approaches are not always mutually exclusive; they often overlap and support each other. A possible overlap between lower-income and higher-religiosity might disrupt Sarıgil's assumptions. Second, more importantly, there is a major methodological flaw in Sarıgil's study, as he does not differentiate between Turkish and Kurdish sub-samples in the WVS's Turkey sample, which is dominantly composed of Turkish respondents.

In a subsequent study, Ekmekçi (2011) criticizes Sarıgil's (2010) methodology claiming that there is no internal validity. He replicates the former's model with more appropriate sample data. Using the WVS results in 2007, Ekmekçi constructs a sample consisting of only Kurdish respondents, as he excludes "irrelevant" and "negative" cases (i.e., Turkish respondents). Ekmekçi considers the mother language parameter, which did not exist in the 1999-2000 survey but was included in the 2007 survey, as a proxy of ethnicity, and obtains 99 observations – i.e., Kurdish-speaking respondents– of whom 53 vote for the DTP, and 46 vote for other parties. In Ekmekçi's first model, while education, income, and religiosity parameters are not statistically significant, ideology becomes significant: Kurds with leftist ideology are more likely vote for the DTP, whereas Kurds with rightist ideology are less likely vote for the DTP. Nonetheless, Ekmekçi underlines that his first model should be taken cautiously because ideology variable may diminish the impact of other explanatory variables, as an ideology is expected to be influenced by

age, gender, religiosity, education and income. Therefore, in the second model, Ekmekçi omits the ideology variable and re-runs the model. He finds that socioeconomic variables are still not statistically significant, while religiosity becomes significant. Religiosity negatively influences the pro-Kurdish voting. In the third model, by including the democracy variable (respondents' satisfaction with democracy), Ekmekçi finds that, while the socioeconomic factors remain insignificant, the parameters of religiosity and democracy become statistically significant and both negatively influence the pro-Kurdish voting. In the fourth model, instead of the democracy parameter, Ekmekçi adds the human rights variable ("respect for human rights"). He concludes that religiosity and human rights parameters are statistically significant, as both negatively influence the pro-Kurdish voting, while socioeconomic variables are once again not significant. Ekmekçi further conducts OLS regression estimation between ideology (the dependent variable) and other explanatory variables, and indicates that age, gender, religiosity, education, income are jointly significant and explain almost half of the variation in the ideology variable. Although Ekmekçi's results seem to be consistent with each other, there is also an important caveat in his statistical analysis as his sample size is indeed limited. Consisting of 99 observations, this sample is not large enough to be representative at the national level.

In response to Ekmekçi's critique, Sarıgil and Fazlıoğlu (2014) have developed a more fine-grained analysis on the factors behind the "Kurdish ethnonationalism" – this time not measured through the proxy of the (pro-Kurdish) voting but the direct question on nationalism. Using the results of an original public opinion survey with 901 respondents from 48 provinces, Sarıgil and Fazlıoğlu estimate how social, economic and political factors affect Kurdish ethnonationalism.

They tackle with three rival perspectives: first, “socioeconomic approach” claims that Kurds with higher socioeconomic status are less likely to support Kurdish ethnonationalism; second, “pro-Islamic approach” claims that Kurds with higher religiosity levels are less likely support Kurdish ethnonationalism; and lastly, “relative deprivation approach” claims that intense feeling of discrimination of Kurdish citizens (by the Turkish state) increases the likelihood of Kurdish ethnonationalism. Their third hypothesis tests whether the Turkish state’s long-term denial of Kurdish ethnicity has a significant impact on the Kurdish political attitudes. By considering cultural and political ethnonationalism as two different dependent variables in two separate models, Sarıgil and Fazlıoğlu conduct ordinal logistic regression analysis.[42] Their empirical findings disprove both pro-Islamic and socioeconomic approaches but validate the relative deprivation hypothesis, which asserts that Kurds who feel discriminated are more likely to support ethnonationalism. In addition to the discrimination perception, the parameters of ideology, region, unemployment and religious sect are statistically significant in explaining the rise of Kurdish ethnonationalism. They conclude that, in comparative terms, leftist, unemployed, pious-Shaafi Kurds living in the southeast are more likely to support ethnonationalism among the Kurdish population. Nonetheless, it is necessary to note that the authors’ conceptualization of relative deprivation and their findings on the discrimination perception might be problematic because discrimination can be related with class-based inequalities and injustices. They ignore possible interactions between ethnicity and class positions in their analysis.

[42] Income, education, discrimination perception, religiosity (attitude and practice) are independent variables. Ideology, residence (rural-urban), region (southeast), unemployment, religious sect (Shaafism is the dominant sect among the Kurdish population in the eastern and southeastern Turkey) gender and age are control variables.

Another study by Sarıgil and Karakoç (2016) reveals different political attitudes among the Kurdish population. Sarıgil and Karakoç analyze which Kurdish segments support the idea of secession (i.e. autonomy) of the Kurdish region. They analyze the three perspectives mentioned above with a brand-new dataset. They use two consecutive TEPAV datasets, which directly ask the ethnicity question, and there are 681 and 1049 Kurdish respondents in 2011 and 2013 respectively. In applying logistic regression, Sarıgil and Karakoç consider the Kurdish support for secession as the dependent variable (secession=1, otherwise=0); income, education, and religiosity (both attitude and practice) as independent variables; BDP voting, ideology (right-left), residence (urban-rural), region (southeast), unemployment, religious sect (Shafiism), gender and age as control variables. Their results show that i) Kurdish citizens' perception of discrimination (or Kurdish grievances) significantly increases the likelihood of their support for secession, ii) higher income levels increase the likelihood of Kurdish secessionism, iii) increase in education levels decrease the likelihood of Kurdish secessionism. This study confirms the significance of class-based factors (income and education) on the formation of different Kurdish political attitudes. Besides, it shows that ideological orientations are influential, because the BDP voting and ideology parameters become statistically significant – i.e. BDP voters with leftist orientations are more likely to support secession. Moreover, it shows that not only religiosity levels, but also religious sects are significant: In contrast to Hanafi Kurds, Shaafi Kurds are more likely to support the idea of secession. One striking result in this study is that while religiosity is not statistically significant on Kurdish secessionism in 2011, it becomes significant in

2013.[43] They argue that religiosity may sometimes lead to the ethnic consciousness and facilitates the pro-Kurdish voting.[44]

Similar to the previous study on Kurdish attitudes towards secessionism, Tezcür's (2016) analysis on "why and how ordinary Kurdish people rebel and join the ranks of PKK" investigates the factors behind the radicalization of Kurdish political preferences in Turkey. Tezcür asks whether poor and working-class Kurdish people gain upward social mobility and material interests by joining the rebellion. He constructs an original dataset – Kurdish Insurgency Militants dataset – through publications of the PKK, which includes information about 8266 Kurdish militants. He conducts four different levels of analysis comparing i) differences in recruitment across districts, ii) temporal patterns of recruitment over time, iii) different types of recruitment, iv) recruits with non-recruits with similar characteristics.[45]

Applying a random coefficient model with the restricted maximum likelihood test along with his own ethnographic observations, Tezcür presents his findings as follows: The majority of Kurdish militants have personally experienced the state violence and victimization; those experiencing violence in the 1990s are more likely to join the rebellion. High levels of conflict, together with the decline of population

[43] In 2009, AKP started "the democratic initiative" to solve the Kurdish issue on the peaceful ground, but the peace talks were interrupted with the re-escalation of violence in 2011 once again. This may be influential on the shifting political attitudes. In addition, one may argue that Roboski Massacre in 28 December 2011, in which 34 Kurdish civilians who were allegedly smuggling across fuel oil and cigarettes across Iraq border were killed, became influential on their shifting political attitudes of Kurds.

[44] The BDP's "the democratic Islam" paradigm and organization of the civic Friday prayers and became effective in the mobilization of the religious-conservative Kurdish electorate.

[45] Tezcür specifies five consecutive periods of the Kurdish uprising: the emergence phase between 1984-1989; the peak years of the uprising ("*serhildan*") between 1990-1994; the decline of the organization after the capture of its leader between 1995-1999; the ceasefire period between 2000-2004; the resurrection of the armed conflict prior to the last ceasefire between 2005-2012. Tezcür's research is quite complicated because it involves seven central hypotheses to explain what leads to Kurdish rebellion: i) low level of education and socioeconomic status (the literacy rates of the district is used as proxy for measuring its development level); ii) experiences of insecurity, clashes and conflicts; iii) strong community presence and communal grievances; iv) cultural distinctiveness vis-à-vis national identity; v) direct exposure to the state violence; vi) embedding in social networks with links to the PKK further; vii) existential threat perception.

in a district, increase the likelihood of participation in rebellion. Kurds whose family members and relatives were victimized by state violence are more likely to join the rebellion. Education increases the opportunity cost of rebellion and decreases the likelihood of the PKK's recruitment: One level increase in education (from middle to high school and from high school to university) decreases the likelihood of rebellion participation by 85 percent. The Kurdish population in more developed districts have lower recruitment ratios. High electoral support for the pro-Kurdish party is likely to be associated with high recruitment levels at the district level. Tezcür (2016) further indicates that today more skilled Kurds join the ranks of PKK compared to past because of the long durability of the Kurdish uprising. Tezcür calls this pattern "social endowment insurgency," which means that, despite large risks and limited gains, highly educated and qualified Kurds are joining the rebellion today. Tezcür's observations on the highly educated and qualified Kurdish insurgents confirm the prospect theory in behavioral economics, which tells us that individuals facing worse options below their reference satisfaction level opt for riskier options for better outcomes (Tezcür 2016, p. 249). Above all, Tezcür's study shows that perception of discrimination and relative deprivation significantly influence Kurdish political preferences and radicalization.

In a more recent study, Tezcür and Gürses (2017) investigate to what extent Kurds' representation in the political system of Turkey has become possible by using an original dataset based on the demographic information of 2,952 ministers, governors and judges from 1950 onwards. They argue that in a discriminatory and exclusionary political environment, Kurdish bureaucrats and politicians have tended to hide their ethnic identity in public. If the dominant norms and rules of the game (in the party system) discourage ethnic minorities from mainstream politics, then these

minorities become alienated from mainstream politics and may opt for radical politics or insurgency. This is indeed what happened when a series of pro-Kurdish political parties were banned in the 1990s. According to the empowerment hypothesis, an ethnic group is more likely to participate in the political system if it has already access to institutional channels; that is to say, the increased representation of Kurds could further promote their participation in the political system, and this implies higher voting turnout. Tezcür and Gürses propose two rival hypotheses: Firstly, they claim that ethnic mobilization would likely diminish where the representation of the Kurdish minority becomes possible, and secondly, the insurgency recruitment ratio would likely be lower where Kurdish minority has a higher representation in the political system. By employing "birthplace" (of southeastern and eastern districts) as a proxy to the Kurdish ethnicity, they show that there is a clear ethnic bias against Kurds in the political system of Turkey. Kurds are less likely to occupy political-bureaucratic positions than Turks — the likelihood of Kurdish insurgency increases in specific localities where Kurds are vastly excluded from the political system. In a similar vein, Kurdish areas with higher political representation are less likely to support radicalism and insurgency, especially, since the 1970s. In order to complement their findings, they suggest looking at how structural factors, such as education and employment, shape Kurdish political mobilizations – I will investigate these in the following statistical chapters.

After reviewing the literature on the Kurdish voting behavior and Kurdish political attitudes, it is now necessary to turn to AKP's and HDP's linkages and articulations among the Kurdish electorate on the ground. In the following section, I will conceptualize the AKP as a machine party that predominantly mobilizes the

Kurdish poor, and the HDP as a movement party that predominantly mobilizes the upwardly mobile Kurdish segments.

2.5 Parties, linkages and articulations

Political parties can be classified in terms of their linkages and articulations. In fact, the interplay between cleavages, linkages and organizational patterns of political parties characterize different party systems (Roberts, 2014). In a well-known study, Kitschelt (2000) depicts three types of party-voter linkages: programmatic, clientelistic and charismatic. These linkages are used by different types of parties. For instance, social democratic parties generally have programmatic linkages, whereas rightist-populist parties often employ personalist and clientelistic linkages. In discussing the relationship between cleavages and linkages, Roberts (2014) maintain that the political parties are "expressions of sociability," they "appeal to and aggregate some societal interests, but in the process, they also divide them from others" (p. 22). Therefore, it is possible to maintain that there are reciprocal relationships between cleavages and linkages: one the one hand, the party preference could be a reflection and expression of cleavage, on the other hand, political parties are able construct and perform these cleavages by using their linkages. In a similar vein, it is possible to argue that "political articulations" are both expressive and constitutive of cleavages (De Leon et al., 2009). In terms of organizational linkages and political articulations, the political parties can be classified as mass programmatic parties, machine parties, personalist parties, professional electoral parties, and movement parties – see Table 7.

Table 7. Organizational Linkages and Political Articulations of Different Types of Parties

	Programmatic Parties	Machine Parties	Personalist Parties	Professional Electoral Parties	Movement Parties
Societal Linkages	Ideological or programmatic appeals/articulations	Patronage and clientelistic appeals/articulations	Charismatic appeals, personal loyalty	Contingent preferences, “marketing” articulations	Underrepresented but salient issues; Identity/ideological appeals
Cleavage Structures	Potentially stratified social cleavages	Segmented political and organizational cleavages	Leadership-based political cleavage	Fluid political divides	Deep-rooted and historical cleavages
Organizational Models	Mass organization, strong local branches	Cadre organization and clientelist networks with local brokers	Cadre (patrimonial) or potentially mass (populist)	Professional teams	Horizontal networks and bottom-up decision making; grassroots organization

Source: Roberts (2014) – I added the last column by reviewing movement-party literature.

First, programmatic parties generally have clear ideological positions and mass organizations. The distinctive feature of programmatic parties is policy objectives for redistribution. These parties often address the material interest of the working-class. Considering the Latin American context, Roberts (2014) argue that programmatic parties with "densely organized social blocs foster the development of mass party organizations with extensive local branches" (p. 27). Second, personalist parties are characterized by the charismatic leadership and/or the patrimonial relationship between the leader and mass electorate. The personalist parties generate loyalty and dependence relationships. There are paternalist and patrimonial variants of the personalist parties. In the late 20th century, personalist parties emerged especially among the leftist populist parties in the developing countries and the far-right populist parties in the developed countries. Personalist parties attribute exceptional characteristics to the party leaders. Nonetheless, the leaders are also portrayed as the representative of "common people." Roberts (2014) underlines that "such leaders generate support through 'outsider' attacks on the political establishment" (p. 29). Third, professional parties are characterized with marketing appeals; they function like professional companies in the field of electoral competition. They aim to create popular brand-names in the electoral marketplace.

Machine parties are characterized by the patronage relations and clientelistic articulations on the ground. Machine parties have hierarchical but decentralized structures: cadre organization at the center and pervasive networks of local and regional brokers on the ground. "Linkages based on patron–clientelism entail an exchange of political loyalty for selective material benefits, such as employment in the public sector, preferential access to government programs and services, or contacts that help to expedite a claim through the public bureaucracy" (Roberts,

2014, p. 28). Movement parties are often characterized with ideological appeals and/or identity-based articulations. In general, there are historical cleavages, grievances and deep-rooted mobilizations behind movement parties. Different from programmatic parties, they were restricted by the establishment in the past and their issue-positions were not allowed to be represented in the party system. Movement-parties have grassroots organization and bottom-up decision-making process. In the following sections, I will discuss these last two categories -machine party and movement party- in detail.

2.6 The machine party literature

One of the major tenets of this dissertation is that the AKP operates as a machine party in mobilizing the poor Kurdish voters. The machine parties are characterized by personal dependence relations between political bosses/patrons and voters/clients, in which there is a pragmatic and "mutually exploitative relationship" between the two sides (Boulay & DiGaetano, 1985, p. 25). Scott (1969) argues that "the most fundamental quality shared by the mass clientele of machines is poverty. Machines characteristically rely on suffrage of the poor and, naturally, prosper best when the poor are many and the middle-class few" (p. 1150). Wolfinger (1972) suggests that, rather than the welfare state, it is the urban machines of the governing parties that meet the urgent material needs of poor migrants by means of patronage and clientelism in the developing countries. Therefore, machine-type politics has often been associated with the patterns of patronage, clientelism and pork-barrel politics, and it is characterized by paternalism, dependency relations and patrimonialism (Scott, 1969; Rock, 1972; Robinson, 1973; Stokes, 2005). Notably, the patron-client linkages gain prominence in defining the machine politics. As a matter of fact, while

some claimed that the withering of political machines after the 1960s, others claimed that machine politics transformed into modern patron-client relations in the following period (Boulay & DiGaetano, 1985).[46] In general, patronage and clientelism are used to describe "the strategy of gaining political support by individuals or parties through the distribution of individual or collective goods to prospective voters" (Sayarı, 2011, p. 1). Whether based on patron-client or other forms of dependency relations, the key distinction of the machine type of politics from the programmatic politics is the contingency factor – citizens/clients promise to vote for a politician to receive benefits, while politicians/patrons promise to provide benefits to citizens/clients in exchange for support.

As a leading scholar in the comparative study of machine politics, Scott (1969) argues that the defining features of machine politics are "informality," "particularism," and "corruption." Scott studied the urban political machines in the US at the turn of the 20th century as well as the "emerging" political machines in the developing countries (Philippines, Indonesia, and India) in the 1960s. He argues "the machine party" term can be applied to political parties in power that provide particularistic favors and distribute personal rewards in order to maximize their votes and to guarantee their reelection. According to him, political machines provide vital welfare functions, personalized help and political socialization especially for the poor migrants who have recently moved to the urban areas. Material inducements of machine parties become attractive to newly-urbanized materially-deprived insecure migrants as much as they can quickly respond to their urgent needs.

[46] In the American context, it is argued that the upward mobility of the majority of migrants above the poverty line with the introduction of full-employment economy and the expansion of the welfare state in the 1950s and 1960s made the political machines redundant (Scott, 1969, p. 1156).

The urban political machines in the US were identified with the patronage resources in the form of public employment, pork-barrel politics, public goods and services for specific ethnic and racial segments. The famous Dawson machine located in Chicago in the 1950s, for instance, used patronage resources and distributed jobs and favors to Black migrants who came from the rural south. In the American context, the bosses of the urban political machines allied with and garnered financial support from the capitalist class and distributed some portion of these financial resources to the poor migrants to buy their vote. In the developing countries, modernization and urbanization processes facilitated the rise of machine parties; the urban political machines met the diverse needs of the poor migrants who had faced insecurity, vulnerability and risk in the developing world.[47]

In both the developed and developing countries, the machine parties were able to build coalitions among diverse electorate with different socio-economic backgrounds on account of their flexible, opportunistic and pragmatic structures. Scott (1696) underscores machine-type of politics flourish in contexts where the legitimacy of the political system is weak, formal channels of political participation are limited, and governments are seen as the source of employment and the guarantor of social mobility, and the ties of family, community and ethnicity are dominant in society. As much as the patrons of machines make "investments" to gain maximum profit (i.e., garnering most votes), machines resemble business firms: "A machine may in fact be likened to a business in which all members are stockholders and dividends are paid in accordance with what has been invested (Scott, 1969, p. 1144).

[47] In the case of the United States, with the mobility of the majority of migrants above the poverty line after the development of full-employment economy and the expansion of the welfare state in in the 1950s and 1960s, the clientelist urban machines had withered away.

Despite his ground-breaking analysis, there are a few caveats in Scott's account. First, his sharp distinction between the programmatic parties (with ideological appeals) and the machine parties (with particularistic-clientelistic appeals) has been challenged by later studies. For instance, highly ideological parties in Latin America have made use of machine politics and clientelistic means to garner popular support among the poor (Levitsky, 2003a, 2003b; Roberts, 2014; Nichter, 2010, 2018). Both the rightist and leftist parties apply clientelistic machine type of politics in order to maintain political power and creating legitimacy for their rule. Scott (1969, p. 1154) himself, at one point, argues that clientelism serves to produce the legitimacy of political regimes in transitions, for avoiding class-based confrontations and for managing ethnic violence and conflicts in developing countries. Recently, many rightist-populist and far-right parties also make use of clientelistic appeals for establishing authoritarian regimes. Secondly, Scott (1969) does not clearly define different forms of machine politics. Although patronage, clientelism, favoritism, pork-barrel and vote-buying have different characteristics, Scott considers them as equivalent processes of "corruption." Although there are commonalities between these processes (as all of them involve the distribution of material and symbolic resources in exchange for votes and are quite different from the programmatic redistribution policies), these should be conceptually clarified and defined in relation to each other.

One of the leading scholars of contemporary clientelism, Stokes (2007) makes distinctions between these processes and suggests that patronage, pork-barrel politics and vote-buying are some sub-classes of clientelism. In general, clientelism refers to reciprocal relationships between patrons, brokers and clients. In clientelism, political actors may or may not hold public office, and thus may or may not be able

to promise the provision of public resources for their clients. Patronage is a sub-type of clientelism that is used by parties in power. Patronage connotes the distribution of state resources by the governing party for gaining more support. In political patronage, the distribution criterion is clientelistic – i.e. “will you vote for me?”. The officeholders provide public resources (e.g. employment opportunities in the public sector) to clients in exchange for their electoral support. As an extended version of patronage, pork-barrel politics is the provision of public goods (such as schools, roads, pavement, sewage, infrastructure) to the particular district in exchange for the dwellers’ votes. While patronage benefits are personal, pork-barrel inducements are communal. The pork-barrel term was first coined in the US for the provision of public works and services to specific ethnic-racial groups in particular urban districts. In pork-barrel politics, while benefits are provided to one or a few districts, costs are shared by all electorates across all regions. As another form of clientelism, vote-buying is the direct distribution of handouts or cash payments in exchange of votes before or during elections.

The contemporary theory of “clientelist” machine politics has been developed in Latin America (Auyero, 2001; Levitsky, 2003a; Stokes, 2005). The clientelist machine parties became dominant in Latin America after the neoliberal turn, especially with the growth of urban informal poor in the region in the 1980s and the 1990s (Levitsky, 2003a). In the case of Argentina, the long-term clientelistic relations that the Peronist Party (PJ) established with the urban poor clearly vividly illustrate the contemporary machine politics. PJ’s clientelist-machine involves not only the distribution of employment opportunities, pensions, foods, medicines, medical services, childcare and social assistance but also problem-solving networks

(Auyero, 2000, 2001; Nichter, 2018). The clientelist machine of the AKP shows ample similarities with the linkages and articulations of the PJ in Argentina.

In a seminal study on the political clientelism in Argentina, Levitsky (2003a) investigates the transformation of the PJ from a labor-dominated, class-based political organization to a clientelist machine party. Confirming Scott's interpretation of machine politics, Levitsky argues that the clientelist machines, first and foremost, must hold public office and have discretionary power in the allocation of public resources. Levitsky argues that for the functioning of the clientelistic machine, the state structure must be lacking bureaucratic autonomy. These conditions were met in Argentina. Traditionally, the PJ had been characterized by a strong working-class organization and depended upon the active participation of labor unions. However, in the 1990s, the Peronist clientelistic networks replaced the working-class organization and the labor unions and became the primary linkage with lower classes. In the context of economic crisis vis-à-vis neoliberal reforms, the working-class organizations deteriorated, and union-based party linkages became ineffective in Argentina. Levitsky (2003a) argues that clientelist politics "provides a relatively low-cost means for Latin American labor-based parties to appeal to low-income voters in a context of de-industrialization and economic reform" (p. 9). With neoliberal reforms, a small segment of the labor force experienced white-collarization (and middle-classization), whereas a large portion of the labor force was pushed into the margins of the informal sector in urban areas in Argentina. The PJ easily replaced its old class-based linkages with clientelist linkages, which are more compatible with market-oriented policies. In the meantime, the white-collar workers began to articulate their interests in non-class terms and renounced the working-class identity in the face of deep economic transformations.

It is possible to say that clientelism played a critical role in managing potential social unrest in the neoliberal restructuring of Latin American economies. Political machines of PJ have especially dominated the poor peripheral provinces of cities, where clientelist linkages have been used to maintain a stable electoral base among lower-class voters and to relegate the issue of poverty to non-political ways. Examining the Latin American context, it is possible to state that the political machines become especially influential in contexts where the poor and working-class are "politically disorganized – that is, when they have a limited capacity for autonomous collective action in both partisan and civic arenas" (Roberts, 2014, p. 30). In addition, clientelist politics are deployed to appease popular reactions and to absorb the potential unrest of the urban poor in a context of economic crisis and reform. Clientelistic machine parties depoliticize the poverty and deprivation issues and instead address the "classless inequality" in the Latin American context (Roberts, 2014, p. 27).

> Clientelist exchanges are thus widely recognized to be 'mechanisms of class control' that depoliticize social inequalities. They allow elite-dominated parties to attract lower-class support, creating segmented political cleavages between rival patronage machines that draw support from heterogeneous and relatively undifferentiated social constituencies, save for their political loyalties. Local party brokers cultivate personal relationships within informal social networks to broker and monitor the exchange of benefits for votes, but clients are not necessarily organized in dense, participatory local branches; little is expected from clients other than their vote (Roberts 2014, p. 28).

Similar to the Peronist experience in Argentina, after the neoliberal transformations in the 1990s, pro-Islamist parties have established political machines in urban peripheries and absorbed potential unrest of the urban poor. Like Peronists, Islamists (or Erdoğanists) in Turkey successfully manage clientelistic linkages with the poor masses in urban peripheries in the 2000s. In a similar manner, they try to depoliticize the issues of poverty and deprivation in Turkey. However, unlike the

Peronists, the AKP's clientelist machine is supported by religious articulations and relegates the issue of poverty to Islamic solidarity.

There is also another similarity between the Peronist and the Erdoğanist regimes: while the PJ attracted poor and less educated voters through clientelist appeals, its vote among the middle-classes significantly declined as they had become alienated from political system because of the claims of corruption. Similarly, in the case of Erdoğanism of Turkey, the secular middle-classes, which are called "anxious moderns" ("*endişeli modernler*") have been almost fully alienated from AKP's politics because of the claims of nepotism, favoritism and corruption (Ağırdır, 2010).

In his ground-breaking studies, Auyero (2000, 2001) investigates the functioning grassroots clientelist machines in the urban enclaves of poverty in Argentina. Considering the case of Peronism, Auyero's (2000, 2001) ethnography emphasizes the indispensable role of brokers. Auyero defines the grassroots clientelist machine as "the problem-solving networks," which are managed by patrons and mediated by brokers.[48] Auyero's depiction of the grassroots clientelist machine is more complex than the distribution of material resources and the provision of personal favors in exchange for votes. Auyero (2001) argues that "this informal institution is not only a network of distribution of material resources but also a symbolic system, a structure that provides ways of ordering reality, thereby rendering the experience of poverty in a particular time and space meaningful." Auyero states that the problem-solving networks

> function as a source of goods and services, a safety net protecting against the risks of everyday life, one of the few remaining paths of social mobility, and

[48] Local brokers are vital components of clientelistic machines. Stokes et al. (2013) suggest that "only locally embedded agents of the machine command the knowledge of voter preferences and partisan inclinations needed" (p. 100). In the 2000s and 2010s, many studies attract attention to the grassroots and micro-level dimensions of clientelism.

> as solidaristic community that stands in opposition to the hardship and exclusion visited on those living in poor and destitute areas (p. 57).

Grassroots clientelist machine in the form of problem-solving networks has two main dimensions: first, the material dimension involves control and distribution of resources as well as information-hoarding, second, the subjective dimension involves the production of symbolic resources (respect and recognition) through problem-solving networks (Auyero, 2000, p. 57). The former material dimension is obvious, such as it is seen in the brokers' discretionary power over social assistance programs. It is the Peronist brokers who bring food and medicine from the local municipality to poor slum-dwellers and provide immediate solutions to their basic material needs in Argentina. In this respect, the brokers act as "gate-keepers" for the poor voters (Auyero, 2000, p. 67). In the Peronist case, the brokers meet regularly with slum-dwellers, always give some useful information and tips to their poor neighbors, such as how to find social assistance and employment, use their contacts in public offices and hospitals in urgent cases. In addition, Auyero (2000, p. 64) stresses that the material benefits provided for the inner and outer circle of patrons/brokers are quite different. On the one hand, the inner circle members have strong relationships with patrons/brokers through family, kinship and long-lasting friendship ties, they have higher expectations such as getting municipal jobs. On the other hand, the outer circle members have weak and intermittent ties with patrons/brokers, thus they have lesser expectations, such as getting food, medicine, and social assistance benefits.

The second subjective dimension of clientelism in Auyero's analysis, wich might seems obscure, needs to be elaborated. Regarding the subjective dimension, Auyero (2000) argues that "clientelist problem solving involves constructing personalized ties, an imagined solidaristic community, and a protective and

predictable network that buffers the harsh everyday reality of the slum" (p. 70). In the eyes of poor clients, this is a way of "obtaining protection against the risks of everyday life and making friends with someone who 'really care'" (Auyero 2000, p. 70). The grassroots clientelist machine from this perspective is not mechanical, which is assumed in vote-buying arguments (Stokes, 2005), but relational in nature – based on protective and reassuring relationships. As a matter of fact, some accounts indicate that the clientelist relationships involve care, trust, recognition, solidarity, reciprocity, familistic orientations and hopes for the future (Gunes-Ayata, 1994; Auyero, 2000). The Peronist brokers in Argentina establish special and intimate relationships with the poor by eliminating bureaucratic hardships, providing immediate solutions to each and every client and paying attention to every detail of their problems.

> Peronist brokers present their political work not as a job but as 'a passion for the people.' Their work is 'all sacrifice' to the point of exhaustion in the post. The brokers insist, 'We care about them.' Some of the clients say, 'The brokers care about us.' Those outside the networks say, 'The brokers care only about themselves.' (Auyero, 2000, p. 73)

Auyero's arguments are very illuminating to understand the AKP's clientelistic machine and Erdoğanist brokers on the ground. Erdoğanists establish intimate relationships with the poor, provide problem-solving networks for the poor. The Islamic solidarity principle and charity discourse ("*hayırseverlik*") are especially useful for the Erdoğanist brokers in their relationships with the poor voters in the urban peripheries. Similar to the Peronist brokers, Erdoğanist brokers present their duty as a passion for the people, a holy mission of caring and sacrifice. I will describe and discuss the role of the AKP brokers in the ethnographic chapters.

Nevertheless, clientelist machine parties bring forward dependence and domination relationships. Auyero (2000) stresses that, as much as the clientelist

machine sticks to the ideological machine, grassroots problem-solving networks turn into the domination networks. He emphasizes the asymmetrical power relations between patrons, brokers, and clients.[49] He further underscores that the clintelistic machines not only persuade the poor voters by gaining their consent, but in necessary cases, the local party leaders and brokers use coercion and intimidation tactics. For instance, in the Peronist case, they threaten the poor preventing their access to social assistance, free basic supplies or medicine. The poor voters are valuable for the PJ brokers as long as they cooperate with the party and themselves.

Nonetheless, clientelist machines attract poor voters through not only redistribution but also recognition, which creates consent for the ideological hegemony of machines. It is mostly because social assistance and benefits is mediated through ideologically oriented brokers in Argentina. For instance, a recent study estimates that over half of the brokers in Argentina distribute goods and benefits in direct response to the citizens' request (Nichter, 2018, p. 15). Auyero (2000) argues that "participation and engagement in problem-solving networks provide a political identity as much as it provides food and medicine" (p. 27). These subjective relations and symbolic resources of clientelism produce the poor's consent to the hegemony, give legitimacy to the capitalist system. The recognition of the poor is as critical as the redistribution of resources to the poor in any clientelist interaction. Similar to the Peronism, it is possible to argue that the AKP brokers

[49] "Insofar as the solutions, services, and protection provided by brokers (inseparable material and symbolic exchanges, in which a thing is given, a favor granted, and something is communicated) are inclined to legitimate a de facto state of affairs that is an unequal balance of power (a domination network), they can be described as ideological machines (following Bourdieu). The act of giving, the caring actions of brokers, and the trusting response of their inner circles transform (or attempt to transform) a contingent social relationship (helping someone who is in need) into a recognized (acknowledged as lasting) relationship: We solve our problem, and by the way, we recognize [them] as our problem solver. This recognition underlies problem-solving through political mediation. In an ideological environment of cooperation, companionship, and solidarity, ties are constructed that freeze a particular balance of force" (Auyero, 2000, p. 73).

provide recognition and produce an identity for the urban poor by distributing charities to and establishing long-lasting relations with them. Auyero underlines that for the functioning of clientelist machine, the long-term interactions between the poor clients and brokers must be sustained. This is the role of brokers as they reproduce the contingent relationship with the poor. “The image of an extended ‘captive’ clientelist electorate (stereotypically portrayed by the media, and sometimes adopted unreflectively by scholars) is in this sense empirically shaky” (Auyero, 2000, p. 74). Because of the “shaky” nature of clientelist exchances, the continuous efforsts of the party brokers gain further significance in this context.

In a more recent study, Zarazaga (2014) adopts a bottom-up perspective and investigates the functioning of the PJ’s clientelist machine in the poor neighborhoods surrounding Buenos Aires. Zarazaga looks at how the clientelist machines function on the neighborhood level and underlines the critical role of multi-tasking brokers. Zarazaga (2014) underscores that “political machines around the world have all relied heavily on networks of brokers to compete in the political arena” (p. 23). Basically, brokers are the party’s agents in neighborhoods and mediate between political patrons and voters. Brokers usually live in the same neighborhoods with voters as “respected neighbors” and “community leaders” - thus, they are expected to develop personal ties with voters - and they often have long experience in grassroots politics (Zarazaga, 2014, p. 25). Brokers have access to various public and private resources through their political patrons and provide these resources to the poor electorate in exchange for their votes. Therefore, there are reciprocal relationships between patrons, brokers, and voters. Although it is impossible to know the actual behavior of clients in the ballot box, it is assumed that the client’s respect for brokers in many cases maintains the reciprocal relationship – i.e. votes for favors and favors

for votes. In addition, brokers are “repositories of neighborhood knowledge” and “walking encyclopedia of local knowledge” (Zarazaga 2014, pp. 24-37). It is only brokers with in-depth local knowledge who can most effectively perform clientelism on the ground. By exploiting locally embedded networks of brokers, parties are able to conduct grassroots clientelism.

What deserves special attention in Zarazaga’s analysis of clientelism in Argentina is that the broker’s role is not limited to gaining the one-time votes; they usually perform multiple continuous tasks in neighborhoods. The conventional arguments on clientelism generally underestimate the broker’s roles and claim that a broker has only three functions: vote-buying or turnout buying, voter mobilization, and rally mobilization. In contrast to this reductionist view, Zarazaga (2014, p. 27) suggests that brokers provide “grassroots presence” to the party by always being in the field, not only during the election periods. Brokers do not establish an ephemeral relationship with clients; they usually have long-lasting relationships with the urban poor, as it is the case in Argentina. Zarazaga (2014, p. 37) underlines that the Peronist brokers are always on duty: they are available 24 hours a day in the neighborhood, and they sometimes visit every household in the neighborhood and permeate every corner of the streets. By being very close to poor voters, brokers know their actual problems and try to respond to their material needs through clientelistic means (such as food and medicine) or pork-barrel services (such as infrastructure, pavement, pipelines, and sewage system).

Brokers sometimes get involved in the exercise of power and help to consolidate the party’s hegemony at the local level. “Brokers also collect information about political opportunities and threats, upcoming protests, and opponents’ activities” in the neighborhoods (Zarazaga 2014, p. 28). They report this local

information to political patrons whenever it is necessary. In this way, brokers help their patrons in "governing" the electorate. Last but not least, beyond clientelistic politics, brokers also conduct traditional ways of campaigning, such as door-to-door campaigns, putting up posters, painting walls with party logos, organizing and filling rallies, and make their patron's name known by the locals. Clientelistic and non-clientelistic roles of the brokers reinforce each other.

Similar to Auyero and Zarazaga, Nichter (2010, 2018) defends a bottom-up approach in analyzing clientelism – hence looking into the grassroots clientelist politics. Nichter (2018) underlines that most studies in the existing literature consider clientelism as a top-down project of "electioneering" (i.e. electoral clientelism), which is almost always controlled by political elites. Beyond this narrow perspective, he attracts attention to the actual performances and capacity of brokers vis-à-vis views and actions of clients on the ground. Nichter (2010, 2018) attracts attention to the fact that brokers' long-lasting relationships with the poor clients extend beyond the election periods. He argues that brokers in the Latin American countries usually carry out "relational clientelism" instead of one-shot "electoral clientelism."

While electoral clientelism is an "episodic phenomenon that exclusively provides benefits during election campaigns," relational clientelism is the ongoing exchange relationships between brokers and clients during and after the electoral campaigns (Nichter 2018, p. 8). The electoral clientelism in the form of "vote-buying" or "turnout-buying" assumes that urban political machines work intermittently through cash payments or handouts to voters (Stokes, 2005). However, relational clientelism presupposes a continuously functioning political machine, which relies upon the performance of multi-tasking brokers.

In this dissertation, in analyzing the clientelist machine of the AKP on the ground, I will use Auyero's perspective on "problem-solving networks," Nichter's conceptualization of "relational clientelism" and Zarazaga's emphasis on "multitasking brokers." I argue that the AKP has been able to establish relational clientelism at the grassroots level by using both material and symbolic inducements – by conducting both redistribution and recognition politics. Through locally embedded networks of brokers vis-à-vis an extensive grassroots organization, AKP has become successful in mobilizing the Kurdish poor on the ground.

2.7 The clientelistic-machine party, AKP, in Turkey

It is difficult to conceive the AKP's machine politics among the poor through conventional clientelism or mechanical party-voter exchanges – i.e. giving cash and distributing handouts before elections. Especially, there is a popular misconception among some secular-leftist circles in Turkey that the AKP "deceived" the poor voters through "the macaroni and coal politics" (Soytemel, 2013; Dorlach 2015).[50] This misperception degrade the agency of the poor and underrates the AKP's quite successful linkages among them (Kapusuz, 2014). Although the patron-client relations necessarily bring forward the issues of domination and subordination, the machine politics must also construct consent and be based on consensual process in order to be sustainable.

[50] Dorloach (2015) reminds that "[m]ost critics on the left hold that AKP's economic and social policies have been thoroughly neoliberal and highly inegalitarian. Accordingly, the AKP's many poor voters have been 'tricked' (*kandırılmış*) into supporting a party that actually does not act in their economic interest, primarily by means of 'symbolic/ideological sources' such as 'conservatism, Islamism and nationalism'. In contrast, the World Bank characterizes the AKP era as a period of 'inclusive growth', referring in particular to the high levels of income and consumption growth achieved by the bottom segments of the population" (p. 520).

Armstrong (2015) defines the AKP as a "formidable grassroots campaigning machine" and emphasizes its effective presence in all neighborhoods of the urban peripheries of Istanbul. The entrepreneurs and brokers of the party are close to "ordinary" people and always active "in the field." Shopkeepers and local artisans became the natural allies and propagandists of the AKP on the ground. Through the door-to-door campaigns of its dedicated brokers, the party has gained trust in the poverty-stricken neighborhoods of the metropolis (Delibaş, 2014). The brokers are active not only during elections but are present at all times; especially, the activism of Islamist women in the neighborhood is very significant for mobilization, which is indeed similar to the RP experience.

It is necessary to recognize that the machine type of politics is not a new phenomenon in the political arena of Turkey. In retrospect, most of the Turkish parties used non-programmatic linkages; and as a matter of fact, most of them were characterized with strong leadership, high degree of personalism and patrimonial relationships. For instance, the long-term leader of the DYP and ex-president of Turkey, Süleyman Demirel, was called "father" by his electorate. The patron-client relations and clientelistic articulations of parties are well-known and widely discussed subjects among Turkish scholars. Following the footsteps of Ayata (1996) and Kurtoğlu (2012), it is possible to specify six historical periods of clientelism, which corresponds to different models of clientelism in the case of Turkey, some of them signify the development of urban political machines: i) patron-client relationships between the secular elites of CHP and the local notables during the modernization period until 1946, ii) Democrat Party's (DP) electoral mobilization of the rural sector (specifically, peasants) through patron-client relations between 1946 and 1960, iii) deployment of urban patronage and pork-barrel resources for the poor

migrants living in the *gecekondu* neighborhoods after the massive migration from rural areas between 1960 and 1980, iv) emergence of electoral clientelism and pork-barrel politics through cash transfers, public goods and specific investments to the targeted districts in the 1980s and 1990s, v) widespread use of favoritism, nepotism and *hemşehri* networks in Turkish politics in the 1990s, vii) establishment of grassroots clientelism by the pro-Islamist RP, and in the following period, reproduction of local clientelist networks vis-à-vis the welfare state expansion through the Islamic charity logic in the 2000s by the AKP.

Even though the traditional patron-client relations between landlords and peasants can be traced back to the Ottoman period, modern patron-client ties were established and institutionalized in the DP period (Kurtoğlu, 2012). DP heavily deployed patronage resources and distributed collective benefits in exchange for electoral support during the 1950s. With the massive migration from the rural to the urban areas in the 1960s, poor migrants participating in the industrial workforce faced a devastating shelter problem. Between the 1960s and 1980s, the Turkish state allowed informal settlements of poor migrants for providing cheap labor force necessary for the capitalist-industrial structure of Turkey. In this period, political brokers and neighborhood brokers (such as *muhtar*s) provided informal construction spaces, employment opportunities, knowledge of new urban capitalism to poor migrants in *gecekondu* neighborhoods. As a matter of fact, the incumbent-party-controlled patronage was the dominant form of welfare provision in the urban setting in Turkey until the 1990s, as the most significant benefit is the extension of municipal services (electricity, roads, sanitation, water, etc.) to *gecekondu* neighborhoods and the provision of the title deeds of informal dwellings to migrants.

Since the 1980s onwards, the municipal authorities have also deployed considerable patronage resources for their parties' success in elections. Especially, recognizing the urgent needs of poor migrants in the peripheries of Istanbul, pro-Islamist municipalities (RP in the 1990s and AKP in the 2000s) have become very effective at the local level, as they were the only political machine that was capable of delivering public goods and clientelist benefits to the urban poor – such as food, shelter, employment, monetary and in-kind assistance. With the significant increase in the capacity and resources of the municipal governments in the last 30 years, the pro-Islamist municipalities have turned into the primary vehicles of patronage, which means that they not only deliver goods and services to poor clients, but also provide preferential treatment and business contracts to the upper-class clients, such as construction companies and real estate agents, in exchange of political as well as financial support, which is then used by the party for electoral campaigns and clientelistic benefits to the poor.

In addition, some recent studies underscore that social assistance – and specifically the distribution of the Green Card – has been used for political ends and become an instrument of electoral clientelism in the AKP era (Yörük, 2012; Ark-Yıldırım, 2017). Public expenditure for social assistance has increased from 6.85 percent of the GDP in 1998 to 13.74 percent of the GDP in 2015 (Yılmaz, 2015, p. 194). Although some accounts claim the programmatic nature of social assistance programs, especially of those conditional cash transfer and means-tested health programs, other scholars argue there is considerable discretion of the local authorities over the allocation of all social assistance program (Buğra, 2017) A recent analysis indicates that

> AKP is at the center of a network of public and private funding turning social policy to clientelist ends. Socially anchored AKP activists link the party to

> voters, allowing it to target social assistance for political advantage and take credit for improvement in local conditions (Ark-Yıldırım, 2017, p. 1).

Some accounts claim that the AKP's success in the 2000s has relied upon a special mix of social policies and neoliberal reforms. Dorlach (2015, p. 519) calls this policy mix as "social neoliberalism," which basically combine orthodox neoliberal economic policies (such as fiscal discipline) with the retrenchment of protective welfare state (e.g., labor market institutions) and the expansion of the productive welfare state (e.g., public health care) in terms of both public spending and population coverage. Social policy is deployed by the AKP for garnering votes as well as avoiding the potential social unrest (Dorlarch 2015, p. 521). Many critics argue that social policies depend upon the charity logic in the AKP period and produced paternalism and dependency relations among the poor (Buğra, 2018).

Beyond the material inducements, however, some accounts suggest that the real success of the AKP must be sought in its extensive grassroots organization and locally embedded networks of brokers in poor peripheral neighborhoods, and face-to-face interactions of brokers with poor populations (Sayarı, 2014; Ark-Yıldırım, 2017; Yıldırım, 2017). In an ethnographic account of Ümraniye, a poor peripheral district populated by poor migrants from Central-Anatolia, White (2002) attracts attention to the role of the dense organizational networks of the pro-Islamist RP in garnering popular support in the district. White argues that both through vertical patron-client relationships and horizontal networks of reciprocal help and assistance, RP was able to mobilize urban poor electorate on the ground.

In a more recent study, confirming the findings of White, Yıldırım (2017) demonstrates that the pro-Islamist parties "are more successful in establishing and sustaining clientelistic linkages" with poor voters than the secular parties (p. 53). The urban machines of the pro-Islamist parties are maintained through long-term

clientelistic relations and continuous face-to-face interactions between brokers and clients, through which they are able to persuade voters. Especially the AKP brokers, who have been living in the same neighborhoods with clients for a long time, perform a vital role in the maintenance of the local political machines. Yıldırım (2017) underlines that the brokers "are usually prominent local figures with high influence and power to solve everyday problems in the neighborhood" and they "are also highly connected to political offices in their districts, municipalities, headman offices ("*muhtarlık"*) and even provincial headquarters of political parties" (p. 56). Ark-Yıldırım (2017) confirms the fact that AKP has an "intensive grassroots organization" in poor urban neighborhoods and she shows everyday activism and clientelist performance of the party brokers (p. 8). The AKP brokers, who are respected and well-known figures in the neighborhoods, play vital roles in the intermediation between the party and voters.

> The party's internal organization reflected this commitment to ground-level omnipresence. It divided the neighborhoods into two wards, each the responsibility of a team of 11 persons. The pattern was replicated by the women's and youth 'branches'. Each ward was further subdivided into streets with a resident party member designated to be responsible for each street (Ark-Yıldırım, 2017, p. 10).

It is important to note that the AKP brokers do not only provide material benefits to poor clients but also produce horizontal bonds and a sense of belonging among them. For instance, the AKP's male brokers regularly visit the Islamic foundations and associations, *hemşehri* associations and mosque communities in the neighborhoods. The party brokers not only establish materialistic-clientelist ties with urban poor by using both public and private resources, but also establish problem-solving networks and provide normative and moral values based on the principle of Islamic solidarity. In a similar vein, Islamic communities and *tariqats* are partners of the AKP sustaining clientelistic machines on the ground. One may contend that these

Islamic groups act as intermediaries between AKP and religious-conservative electorate in the urban peripheries. Islamic community members can be labeled as "organizational brokers" of the AKP (Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015).

> The AKP's strategy was to incorporate the religious networks into its efforts to help the poor through material and cash distribution. The moral dimension of alms-giving made this a natural function of these foundations, through reference to Islamic instruments of charity such as *zekat* (alms tax) and *sadaka* (alms-giving) (Ark-Yıldırım, 2017, p. 8).

In parallel with the neoliberal logic, the AKP relegates the issue of poverty to non-political venues; in general, the party address the issues of poverty and deprivation through Islamic principles of *ummah* and charity. The party brokers are able to govern and dominate the poor electorate with the Islamist articulations. Ark-Yıldırım (2017) concludes that the AKP is more successful in exploiting local and traditional-religious opportunities to mobilize and consolidate the electorate than all other political parties on the ground.

The AKP's clientelistic machine politics are effective on the Kurdish poor as well. The AKP uses co-ethnic brokers and intermediaries for appealing to the Kurdish electorate; the neighborhood brokers regularly visit the poor Kurdish households; similar to the party leaders at the national-level, the brokers at the local level use Islamic brotherhood discourse as a co-optation strategy towards Kurdish citizens; especially the female brokers of the party regularly meet with the poor religious-conservative Kurdish housewives; both male and female party brokers act in accordance with the Islamic norms (such as "only ladies' meetings," modest clothing, use of Islamic jargon) and address the traditional-religious-conservative habitus of the Kurdish poor.

Arıkan Akdağ (2015) provides a first systematic study on the clientelistic dynamics behind the Kurdish voting for AKP. She suggests that, between the 2007

and 2011 elections, there is a serious fluctuation (electoral volatility) in Kurdish votes between AKP and BDP, which mainly depended on the AKP's shifting policy towards the Kurdish issue. The AKP's U-turn on the Kurdish issue, from recognition in the democratic initiative process in the 2000s to the regime of coercion and repression in the 2010s, culminated in the imprisonment of thousands of Kurdish political activists and suppression of Kurds' political rights after 2015. In relation to this dramatic change, Arıkan Akdağ asks which mobilization strategies of the AKP have become effective among Kurdish voters. She argues that there are two forms of compliance - coercive and voluntary - among Kurdish voters towards the AKP. The voluntary compliance has been achieved through the clientelist mobilization. She discloses that the party has successfully made use of the clientelistic relations, which were carried out by the co-ethnic party brokers, in mobilizing the Kurdish voters in Istanbul. In fact, the AKP's clientelistic mobilization is more effective than the party's programmatic appeals on the ideologically swing Kurdish voters (2014, 2).

Arıkan Akdağ looks at the distinctive clientelistic strategies formulated by the district branches of AKP in addressing the peculiar dynamics of the neighborhoods in Istanbul. She analyzes 5 neighborhoods in Beyoğlu, 4 neighborhoods in Sancaktepe and 3 neighborhoods in Beykoz. She conducted in-depth interviews with the party activists and made participant observations in the candidates' visits to the neighborhoods in the campaign periods. She specifies that, first, the AKP has a centralized party organization with high number of intermediaries and their networks, and second, the local party organizations depend upon high degree of cooperation and interaction between activists and ordinary citizens, and last, the coethnic brokers become very effective in the mobilization of Kurdish votes at the neighborhood level. She underlines the fact that clientelist mobilization necessitates a

“repetitive course of interaction” between brokers and voters. That is why the party make use of the coethnic intermediaries as well as the existing ethnic networks in mobilizing the Kurdish electorate. Strong party organization on the ground has provided the AKP greater capacity “to deal with the information problem, identify different types of voters and specifically target them” (Arıkan Akdağ, 2014, p. 55). She lastly underscores that the clientelist exchanges not only entail an instrumental logic – the distribution of material resources – but also involve “emotional character, increasing attachment to the party through the formation of common values” (Arıkan Akdağ, 2014, p. 55).

In the final analysis, it is necessary to emphasize the relations between the clientelist machine politics of AKP and the poor material conditions of its Kurdish electorate. It is necessary to remind that the clientelist machine politics becomes especially relevant in the context of urban poverty, especially of those recent rural-to-urban migrants. In many developing countries, clientelist inducements of urban political machines become attractive to materially-insecure migrants. The lower the average income and the fewer the average years of schooling of poor migrants, they are more prone to clientelist politics (Scott, 1969, p. 1150). It is the Kurdish subproletariat who have become the primary target of clientelist networks of pro-Islamist actors in the last decades (Ark-Yıldırım, 2017; Yörük, 2014). The poor and undereducated Kurds are more often appealed by the AKP’s clientelistic machine politics than the educated and relatively better-off Kurds.

2.8 The movement party literature

In this dissertation, I argue that the HDP’s strategies, resources and frames in mobilizing the Kurdish electorate can safely be interpreted within the “movement

party" framework (Kitschelt, 2006). Movement parties are based on existing social movements and/or emerge out of deep-rooted social and political mobilizations. Different from the conventional political parties, most of which rest upon hierarchical structures, movement parties are characterized by horizontal networks and bottom-up decision-making processes. In movement parties, political activists perform organizational practices and strategies inherited from the social movement past in the areas of party formation and electoral competition.

Current literature on movement parties exclusively focus on the Green and left-libertarian movement parties (also known as "the new left") in Western Europe (Kitschelt, 1988, 1989, 2006; Kruszewska, 2016). Kitschelt argues that Green parties have depended on the long-term social movements and the left-libertarian parties have relied upon the diverse coalitions of social movements. Instead of policy change, the movement parties are eager to construct new political paradigms towards the ideals of participatory democracy, decentralization, and egalitarianism. Most of these parties aim for "grassroots democratic and participatory coordination among activists" (Kruszewska 2016, p. 1). In discussing the movement parties in the case of Western Europe, Kitschelt (1989) points towards the necessary conditions for the emergence and success of the movement parties: favorable institutional structure, political opportunities, movement capacity, organizational and human resources.

In analyzing the relationship between leftist parties and social movements, Roberts (1998) constructs a genuine typology of movement parties: "the vanguard model" (with top-down organization, in which the party controls social movements), "the electoralist model" (in which the party mobilize social sectors during electoral campaigns) and "the organic model" (which prioritizes social movement goals and grassroots participation at the expense of party organization). Considering this

typology, I argue that the HDP corresponds to the organic movement party model. For the organic movement parties, Roberts (1998) argues that

> [The] distinctions between the party and its constituent social organizations are deliberately blurred; indeed, the party may appear to be more of a movement than an apparatus for electoral contestation, as it is directly engaged in social struggles outside the sphere of institutional politics, and party members and leaders are drawn directly from social movements rather than from the ranks of a separate, professional political caste (p. 75).

Some argue that the boundaries between party organizations and social movements have become blurry with the ever-shifting challenges of globalization (Goldstone, 2003; Hutter et al., 2018). With the recent anti-austerity protests and occupation movements, we have seen "accelerated, and complex interaction and fusion of movements and parties" (Hutter et al., 2018, 323). On the one hand, leftist parties have adopted catch-all strategies and moved towards unconventional and anti-institutional politics that have usually been attributed to the social movements, on the other hand, social movements have become professionalized and made investments in political entrepreneurship and technologies of competition. Kitschelt (2006) argues that today "the boundaries between different modes of collective political interest articulation figuring under the rubrics of movements, interest groups, and parties are empirically fuzzy" (p. 278). In addition, "the new conventional wisdom" that is mentioned above proposes that post-materialist values and post-industrial cleavages have already replaced the traditional class-cleavages in the advanced capitalist countries. In parallel with this argument, some accounts claim that new social movements based on identity politics and cultural values have become much more appealing than the materialistic interest-driven political preferences (Touraine, 1981; Norris & Inglehart, 2011; della Porta, 2017). Accordingly, in the 1990s and the 2000s, the main social basis of the new left movements – e.g. the anti-globalization

and anti-austerity protests– were not the traditional working-class but the new middle class, which is recently defined as "precariat" (della Porta, 2017).

Although they are generally analyzed in distinctive literature, there are a few accounts that investigate the interactions between movements and parties (Glenn, 2003; Almeida, 2010, 2015; Hunter et al., 2018). Almeida attracts attention to the new phenomenon of "social movement partyism," in which the "opposition parties that align with civil society organizations and use their organizational resources to heavily engage in street protests" (cited in Hunter et al. 2018, p. 322). McAdam and Tarrow (2010) outline six possible ways of interaction between movements and parties:

> Movements introduce new forms of collective action that influence the parties' election campaigns. Movements join electoral coalitions, or in extreme cases, turn into parties themselves. Movements engage in proactive electoral mobilization. Movements engage in reactive electoral mobilization. Movements polarize political parties internally (p. 533).

The spatial view on movement parties attracts attention to "underrepresented but salient issue positions" in society (Kitschelt, 2006, p. 282). Accordingly, movement parties represent unresolved and conflicting issues in society. This issue is Kurdish conflict in Turkey. The principal-agent model suggests that social movements (being an agent) necessitate political parties (being a principle-institution) in order to overcome information asymmetry, uncertainty and moral hazard problems. In the literature, it is generally assumed that there are two-way relationships between movements and parties. On the one hand, if social movements cannot find room for their issue positions within the established political system, if they cannot access to the existing political parties and institutions, then they may themselves build political parties for achieving the necessary institutional change. On the other hand, if the collective objectives of political parties cannot be achieved

through one-time policy proposal and sudden change, and the achievement of common objective necessitates organized compliance and sustained mobilization, then the political entrepreneurs of existing political parties may organize and campaign for social movements (Kitschelt, 2006).

Contemporary theories of contentious politics can also be applied to the analysis of movement parties. The pioneers of contentious politics research, McAdam et al. (1996) offer a synthesis of three main theoretical approaches for explaining social movements: 1) "the structure of political opportunities and constraints confronting the movement" 2) "the forms of organization (informal as well as formal) available to insurgents" 3) "the collective processes of interpretation, attribution, and social construction that mediate between opportunity and action" (p. 2). This tripartite scheme can be insightful in the analysis of movement parties because, like social movements, the emergence and success of the movement parties depend upon the three major factors: political opportunities, resource mobilization, and framing process. Social movement literature assumes that movements emerge when political opportunities are opening and when allies emerge in the political system. Nonetheless, institutional openness is not a sufficient condition; strategic decisions and practices of political entrepreneurs and activists are very crucial as well. Moreover, the success of any movement depends on the professional and dedicated leaders, entrepreneurs, and experienced activists, who represent movements, provide organizational tactics, and articulate coherent ideologies. Furthermore, movements must have relevant frames and cultural toolkits for attracting attention to their issue-space and mobilizing the target population.

Political opportunity approach (also known as, opportunity structure approach) argues that the success of movement parties depends upon the existence of

mobilizing structures or the windows of opportunities. There are five types of opportunity structures: 1) relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system (i.e., constraints and incentives for collective action in political system), 2) stability of elite alignments (i.e., splits and fragmentations within the ruling elite), 3) presence of elite allies, 4) the (capitalist) state's capacity and propensity for repression, and 5) influence of international and foreign actors. (Romano, 2006, p. 20; Van Cott, 2007, p. 40).[51] It is possible to argue that the most significant one among these factors is the state's capacity for repression. Hence, Skocpol (1979) adopts an extremely structuralist perspective and argues that revolutions have neither been made by vanguard parties nor revolutionary movements but through the crisis of the state. However, sometimes well-organized movements and powerful opposition parties overcome less favorable structural conditions. In these cases, the strategic decisions and actions of movements parties become more significant, as political opportunity structure takes a backseat. Romano (2006, p. 12) argues that "challenger movements may themselves play a major role in precipitating the kind of socio-political and economic crises so central to structuralist theories." The Kurdish political movement in Turkey, for instance, became successful in dramatically repressive political environment, even in the face of direct state violence, in the 1990s and has been acknowledged by the Turkish state as the main stakeholder in the peace talks in the 2010s. In this period, the HDP has been able to sustain its organization and expand its electoral basis with strategic moves – such as Turkeyification.

[51] Structural opportunities also emerge in the following cases: shifts in the mode of production, class conflict, fiscal and economic crises, subsistence crises, improvements in socio-economic conditions, modernization, urbanization, decline of peasantry, rapid demographic changes, institutional transformations, prolonged oppression, internal colonialism, ethnic conflicts, etc.

According to the resource mobilization (RM) approach, movement parties must have financial, human and cultural resources, which may be internally or externally provided. The RM scholars argue that although collective grievances (and grievance framing) is a necessary condition for the emergence of movements, "grievances are ubiquitous in every society and that, as a consequence, grievances alone cannot be sufficient conditions for the rise of social movements" (Romano 2006, p. 12). The available resources and opportunities are sometimes considered more important than grievances in initiating and maintaining collective action.[52] One of the basic premises of the RM approach is that organizational networks are necessary for a movement party to achieve mobilization on the ground. Della Porta (2017) says, "contentious politics needs dense networks of relations to support massive recruitment" (p. 455). It is indeed the "dense organizational network of affiliates" in most cases that carry out movement parties in Latin America (Van Cott 2007, 41). It is possible to contend that "social movement networks are embedded in larger 'movement webs' that link the movement's core members to sympathizers and that widen the pool of potential voters" (Van Cott, 2007, p. 43). The networks of movement entrepreneurs and activists play a significant role in recruiting new members. The entrepreneurs and activists usually first turn to their families, kin members and friends for recruitment (Romano, 2006, p. 72). In addition to these organizational networks, "organizational maturity" of social movements, which is usually measured by the years in existence, is significant for the sustainability of movement parties. Van Cott (2007) argues that "[t]he longer a social movement organization has been in existence and the more political experience its leaders and

[52] "The resource mobilization approach has been most fruitful in analysing mobilization processes and in emphasizing the role of existing organizations and networks in laying the groundwork for social movement formation." (Klandermans, 1997 cited by Romano 2006, 12)

members have, the more its members will feel a sense of loyalty to and collective identification with the organization" (p. 43).

Within the RM approach, the rational choice (RC) theory exclusively focuses on costs and benefits of participation in movements and becomes popular with the appropriation of tools of economics by political scientists. RC theory basically claims that "rational actors will choose options that maximize their gains and minimize their risk, based on the information available to them" (Romano, 2006, p. 68). RC scholars prioritize the interest-based calculations of movement participants vis-à-vis the strategic use of rewards and punishments by movement entrepreneurs. Following the footsteps of Olson, movement entrepreneurs must provide some selective incentives and disincentives in order to overcome the free-rider problem.[53] RC presents the movements as rational strategic actors that can calculate expected costs and benefits, weigh their interests and strategic options. In this regard, it is not surprising to see that the Kurdish movement has wide-ranging resources and extensive mobilization capacity on the ground, and the entrepreneurs of the Kurdish movement use selective incentives and disincentives (Tezcür, 2016).

As social movement scholars underline, the RM approach explains "how" of the movement formation (emphasizing the role of existing organizations and networks) but do not address the "why" question. The RM perspective is not interested in consciousness, ideology, collective identity, solidarity, and culture,

[53] Romano (2006) describes of RC theory on movements as follows: "movements must offer to the people goals that matter to the people; they must convince people that their individual participation in movement activities is important and/or makes a difference in achieving the goals in question; they must convince people that most of their peers, or enough of their peers, are also going to participate in movement activities; they need to, wherever possible, offer selective incentives to movement participants and selective disincentives or sanctions to non-participants or opponents of the movement; they must coordinate and organize the movement's activities; the movement must eventually be able to affect people's preferences so that they come to place value upon goals of the movement; the movement must present a credible image to the people, usually through an appealing ideology, vision of the future, raison dêtre, and successful actions" (pp. 68-69)

which form the very basis of mobilization. Besides, RC theory within the RM approach assumes that the movements are self-interested and utilitarian actors, and it falls short of explaining non-material values, identities, and cultural frames that trigger movement formation. In the rise of social movements and movement-parties, we must recognize the identity issues and the role framing –cultural frames– approach. On the macro level, Romano (2006, p. 21) cites four significant issues related to the framing approach: the cultural toolkits available to movement actors; the strategic framing efforts of movement groups; the frame contests between the movement and other collective actors; the structure and role of the media. In addition, he suggests that social psychology, specifically the grievance framing and the relative deprivation perspectives, may be helpful to understand why identity matters and to what extent cultural frames are effective on movements. (Romano 2006, p. 15). Grievances and grievance-framing, consciousness, identity, personal integrity, perception of freedom, dignity, and ideology must be considered for understanding movement formation. Sometimes, previously existing social ties (kinship, ethnicity, family, class) and solidarities facilitate the reconstruction of collective identities in new contexts. In the case of the Kurdish movement, collective grievances and the framing of these grievances are very significant (Tezcür, 2015).

As it is discussed previously, there is scarce literature on the movement parties except some studies on Green parties and left-libertarian parties in the Global North. Considering the insufficiency of current literature, Van Cott's (2007) analysis of ethnic or indigenous movement parties in Latin America is very significant in terms of our case study in Turkey. Van Cott underlines that the movement parties in Latin America mostly prefer to call themselves "indigenous political movements" rather than using conventional political party terminology. The most influential

movement parties are located in the Andean region- i.e. Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela – where there are deep tensions between "the ruling white-mestizo population" and "the subordinate indigenous population" (Van Cott, 2007, p. 5). Leaders and members of these movement parties are from the non-dominant groups. Van Cott cites several factors in explaining the rise of movement parties in the Latin American context, such as the decline of leftist parties, weakening of labor unions, erosion of class cleavages, institutional deadlock and party system fragmentation in the 1980s and 1990s.[54]

In parallel to the social movement literature, Van Cott (2007) underlines that the relatively open institutional environment in Latin America facilitated the emergence and sustainability of movement parties. He specifies three contextual factors for the relative success of movement parties: 1) democratization and decentralization experiences in the region, 2) new permissive laws that lowered the existing electoral threshold and led increasing parliamentary representation, 3) reserved seats for the indigenous people. Nonetheless, he underlines that the indigenous movement parties are not the natural result of third-wave democratization. Neither democratization nor open institutional environment provide sufficient conditions; instead, strategic decisions of political actors become more significant than structural factors. In the formation of movement parties, "the availability of professional political cadre to provide ideology, organizational skills, and experienced candidates" are critical factors (Van Cott, 2007, p. 40).

[54] "Relationships with leftist parties and movements had a profound ideological and organizational influence on contemporary indigenous leaders. The decline of the left opened space in the political system for indigenous movements accustomed to participating in politics through leftist parties. Tarrow observes that leftist parties are important allies for subaltern groups that seek greater representation in the political system because they tend to be more open than center or conservative parties to new ideas expressed by challengers" (Van Cott 2007, 37).

Besides, the emergence and success of movement parties require the politicization of already existing ethnic cleavages and the massive mobilization of indigenous groups at the local level (Van Cott, 2007, p. 8). Moreover, a successful indigenous movement in one country has set an example for other indigenous movements in neighboring countries. Furthermore, the indigenous movements incorporate non-indigenous candidates and form electoral alliances with nonindigenous parties and movements. Especially their coalitions with leftist parties and movements become a vital resource for the sustainability of ethnic movement parties. "Their emphasis on opposition to neoliberal reforms helped the movements to attract numerous nonindigenous supporters and to form interethnic popular alliances" (Van Cott, 2007, p. 10). The coalition between the indigenous movements and leftist parties is indeed similar to the Kurdish case in Turkey; Kurdish movement established alliances with various revolutionary-leftist groups in past. The first successful example of cooperation between Turkish leftists and the Kurdish movement was the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP) in 1960s.[55] The TİP experience gave rise to the Revolutionary Eastern Culture Hearths[56] in the early 1970s, which later formed the basis of the contemporary Kurdish movement (Yeleser, 2011).

In the Latin American context, unresolved conflicts between indigenous groups and dominant white population(s) culminated in the politicization of indigenous identities and the deep-rooted mobilizations around them. Similarly, the pro-Kurdish movement party in Turkey has a deep-rooted mobilization history, which lies back to the 1970s. By employing the RM approach, Van Cott argues that the "organizational maturity" of indigenous movements, which is measured by the

[55] TİP addressed the Kurdish issue in three main dimensions: underdevelopment of the Kurdish region, the emancipation of Kurdish peasants from the feudal lords dominant in the region and the collective rights of oppressed Kurdish nation.
[56] *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları* in Turkish, known as DDKO.

years in existence, is significant for their success. The average time passed between the emergence of ethnic/indigenous movement and its party formation is about 14 years in Latin America. In the Kurdish case, this interval is shorter – i.e. almost 10 years. While the PKK first appeared in the mid-1980s, the first Kurdish legal party was established in the early 1990s.[57] From the RM approach, other relevant factors for the success of movement parties are the geographical concentration and the proportional size of the indigenous population (Van Cott, 2007, pp. 23-24). The indigenous movement parties have especially become successful in the districts where their populations were highly concentrated. In a similar vein, the pro-Kurdish movement parties have become dominant in the eastern and southeastern provinces of Turkey, where Kurdish population density is remarkably high, from the 1990s onwards. Van Cott (2007) claims that movement parties provide fresh models for democratic representation in Latin America since they are more inclusive, deliberative, and participatory; successful ethnic parties have deep roots in society, clear programmatic and policy goals. The leaders of movement parties "have been champions of transparency and have been at the forefront of the fight against corruption" (Van Cott, 2007, p. 6). Nevertheless, it is necessary to remark that the movement parties have not substituted the original indigenous movements in the Latin American context, in contrast, the indigenous movements continue to be more significant than the parties. This condition is also similar to the Kurdish case in Turkey: the original movement is more influential than pro-Kurdish parties.

[57] Informal accounts specify the PKK's the foundational year as 1984; it is the first time the PKK openly attacked the Turkish military. The first Kurdish political party, HEP, was established in 1991.

2.9 The contentious-movement party, HDP, in Turkey

Based on the "democratic autonomy," "radical democracy" and "self-government" discourses and pro-labor, pro-feminist and ecological policy proposals, today the HDP is the most progressive-leftist party in the Turkish parliament (Akkaya & Jorgenden, 2012). The HDP brings diverse leftist, minority, and excluded groups together as equal partners (Grigoriadis, 2016; Yörük, 2017). Although Kitschelt (2006) claim that the movement parties would necessarily dissolve over time (because he believes that the recognition and acknowledgment of their issue-positions by all segments of the society are impossible), the HDP has successfully extended its issue-positions beyond its primary interest group – i.e. the Kurdish minority. The HDP has been able to diversify and broaden its electoral base by manifesting its will for Turkeyification and by embracing all subaltern and minority groups living in Turkey.

It is necessary to remember that the Kurdish movement in Turkey emerged from the ranks of the revolutionary left in the 1970s.[58] However, soon after, Kurdish revolutionary-leftists took a different pathway with their criticisms towards Kemalism and "Turkish colonialism" that had plagued the Turkish leftist movements of the period.[59] As a significant political opportunity, the relatively liberal political

[58] Being organized in the Kurdish populated eastern and southeastern region, Eastern Meetings, DDKO affiliated with the TİP could be recounted as a major manifestation of the Kurdish leftist mobilization (Güneş, 2013a). However, there are many historical accounts in the literature that lays the origins of the Kurdish "nationalist" movement to 1920s and even to the turn of the century. The Kurdish nationalist actors of the 1920s (aghas, tribal leaders, and religious sheikhs) were indeed eager to be equal partners of the new state, but their will for equal status was harshly repressed. The removal of the caliphate vis-a-vis the Kurdish religious uprisings led to the eruption of the Kurdish nationalist thought in this period.

[59] "Bozarslan points at two figures whose ideas have accelerated Kurdish militants' break-away from the Turkish Left, İbrahim Kaypakkaya and Sait Kırmızıtoprak. Kaypakkaya developed the first criticism of Kemalism as a fascist regime, considering this regime to have been anti-Kurdish and anti-revolutionary from its beginnings. Kırmızıtoprak adhered to the thesis that Kurdistan was a colony, which implied that Kurds had to fight an anti-colonial war of liberation/independence. Kırmızıtoprak, moreover, openly accused the Turkish Left of being a colonial Left, that is, of not representing the colonized people. It is partly Kırmızıtoprak's legacy that contributed to the radicalization of the

environment provided by the 1960 constitution allowed the Kurdish leftists to join and support the (legal or illegal) leftist-revolutionary movements of the period. However, the opening of the political system for leftist mobilization was a very brief period, as the leftist-revolutionary groups were harshly punished in the 1970s and later the liberal environment was totally suspended with the 1980 military coup. The systematic torture against the Kurdish leftists in the Diyarbakır Prison in the 1980s became an emblematic moment for the massive Kurdish resistance developed in the following period (Güneş, 2013b). In 1983, the state outlawed the Kurdish language, continued changing Kurdish (geographical) place names to Turkish, and forbade the Kurdish families to give their children Kurdish names (Romano, 2006, p. 80).

The repressive (or closed) political system has dialectically led to the rise and hold of secessionist Kurdish revolutionary movement. In 1985, the Turkish state introduced "the village guard system," through which those dissident Kurds who refused to be part of the village guard became suspects of terrorism. The Turkish state accused dissident Kurds or those Kurds who did not support its militarist operations as being "supporters of the PKK." In the eastern and southeastern provinces, the Kurdish populations confronted with the violent measures of the security forces (such as extrajudicial executions in the 1990s) and were forced to evacuate their villages and towns (Romano, 2006, 82-84). It is estimated that almost 3 million Kurdish citizens had to leave their homelands in the southeast regions of Turkey in the 1990s (Içduygu, Romano & Sirkeci, 1999). It is argued that the conventional tactic of the Turkish state in managing the Kurdish unrest in the eastern and southeastern provinces rested on the neoliberal capitalist logic, which is based on the military-industrial complex and the war economy (Tuzla Araştırma Grubu,

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Kurdish movement and its separation from the Turkish Left in the early 70s" (Casier and Jorgenden 2012, p. 9)

2009). In this period, as a response to the chronic crisis of neoliberal capitalism, Islamist and Kurdish movements erupted and became very pervasive among the Kurdish society (Yörük, 2014). In the 1990s, legal Kurdish political parties, which had millions of supporters in the Kurdish populated region, were banned by the militarist state apparatus due to the "national security threats" (Romano, 2006; Koğacıoğlu, 2004). Likewise, the political cadre of Kurdish leftists (e.g. Leyla Zana, Hatip Dicle and Orhan Doğan) as well as Turkish intellectual allies (e.g. İsmail Beşikçi) supporting the Kurdish cause have been severely punished and imprisoned (Alpay, 2008; Kasapoğlu, 2016).

Along with the oppressive measures against the Kurdish movement, the repressive and violent attitudes of the Turkish state towards ordinary Kurdish citizens exacerbated the deep-rooted grievances among the Kurdish society in the 1990s. In this period, the violent practices towards the ordinary Kurdish citizens – destruction, burning down and evacuation of villages, special commando operations, mass killings, disappearance of dissident citizens- intensified the communal grievances and forged ethnic consciousness among Kurdish people and reinforced their collective mobilization.[60] On the dialectical relationship between the state violence and the rise of Kurdish ethnic consciousness (and the subsequent support for the Kurdish movement), some argue that if the Turkish state had recognized democratic and cultural rights of the Kurdish citizens in the past, the Kurdish mobilization could not have been such successful today (Romano, 2006, p. 179). It is the Kurdish movement's framing of communal grievances that became effective and created

[60] "People who may have had little awareness of their Kurdish ethnicity, or who viewed their ethnicity as a private matter, sometimes experienced a forced change of heart when the state persecuted them or razed their village because of their ethnic identity. The state treated its Kurdish-speaking citizens differently, and because ethnic identity is always relative (the "we" of an ethnic group cannot exist without a "they"), such differential treatment could only eventually lead to assimilation or politicization of Kurdish identity" (Romano 2006, p. 110).

massive mobilization among the Kurdish people. The existing literature suggest that grievances have causal effect on the contentious politics (Opp, 1988; McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1988). Grievances "are generally understood as the perception that a group or person is experiencing illegitimate inequality, has been the victim of injustice, or feels a general moral indignation about some state of affairs" (LeFebvre & Armstrong, 2018, p. 9).

Speaking of the grievances of the Kurdish intellectuals in the 1960s, Romano states that "Kurds in the east, confronted with the wealth of Turks in the west, could be expected to feel frustrated with their relative lot and agitate for change" (Romano, 2006, p. 135). Hence, for the Kurdish leftists, the underdevelopment and poverty of the Kurdish region were significant issues in the 1970s. Kurdish leftists believed that their resources had been colonized and exploited by the Turkish capitalists – as they said, "Kurdistan is an internal colony of the capitalist classes of other nations" (Romano, 2006, p. 135). In the 1970s, the Kurdish leftists had framed their political agenda as an anti-colonial struggle, which was later inherited and adopted by the illegal Kurdish movement, PKK. Romano (2006) underscores that the grievance framing of the Kurdish movement could be associated with the colonization, underdevelopment and exploitation processes.

In addition to former grievances, the relative deprivation that Kurds have felt and experienced in the face of the broader modernization, urbanization and capitalist exploitation processes are significant in terms of their political mobilization.[61] It is possible to state that the Kurdish relative deprivation emanated from the two factors:

[61] The relative deprivation (RD) is a subjective evaluation; if people believe that they deserve better or they do not have what they deserve, then they feel anger and resentment (Smith et al., 2012). In social-psychological literature, RD is based on interpersonal comparisons, whereas in the political science literature, RD is based on "people's comparisons of their present situation with either their past, future, desired, or deserved selves." (Smith et al., 2012, p. 204).

first, war, violence and forced migration, and second, urban capitalist inequalities. Kurdish grievances have intensified over time after the forced migration, especially with the encounters in urban capitalism. Kurds' disadvantaged position vis-à-vis the (hegemonic) position of Turks has strengthened their perception of relative deprivation (Romano, 2006). There are three steps in the development of group-level relative deprivation: comparison, cognition or perception of disadvantage, and the feeling of unfairness. It is necessary to underline that the pro-Kurdish parties become significant mediums in the formation and articulation of these cognitions and perceptions. I argue that the HDP, as the contentious movement party, provide a suitable environment in the expression of former grievances and relative deprivation. If the party was not representing these hard feelings, Kurdish mobilization would have been radicalized and turned into "street politics" – as we see in the case of radical Kurdish youth (Darıcı, 2011).

It is not surprising to see that the rapid urbanization experience facilitated the Kurdish ethnic consciousness. As much as the Kurdish society became urbanized, the extent of Kurdish educated-class has expanded and pro-Kurdish mobilization has gained momentum (Romano, 2006). While the "Kurdish intelligentsia" had represented the Kurdish identity and mobilization in the past, it is "the new urban-educated Kurds" along with "the Kurdish skilled artisan and professional workforce" in the metropolitan areas who have become the conveyors of politicized Kurdish identity later (Romano, 2006, p. 112). After the forced migration, with their strong feeling of relative deprivation, the emerging Kurdish middle-class (including professionals, lawyers, doctors, engineers, traders, businessmen, etc.) have become significant actors within the Kurdish movement.[62]

[62] In the case of Kurdish upper-classes supporting the HDP, "[w]hat makes RD so useful is the recognition that those who should feel deprived by objective standards often do not feel deprived and

As it is argued previously, the success of the movement parties depends on two main structural factors: 1) openness of political opportunity structure, 2) the state's capacity and propensity to use repression. The banning of successive Kurdish political parties left no room for the democratic demands of Kurdish people in the 1990s and ceased the possibilities of legalization of the Kurdish movement, and further led to the escalation of violence with attacks of the PKK. In the early 2000s, the relative opening of the Turkish political system with the EU accession talks provided opportunities for the pro-Kurdish parties and associations. However, in the 2010s, AKP's mostly ambivalent approach towards the Kurdish issue has limited the pro-Kurdish political mobilization. As the AKP regime has resorted to authoritarian measures in silencing the Kurdish dissidents, the pro-Kurdish parties (BDP and HDP) had to survive major hardships.

Considering its origins, the Kurdish movement's cultural framework rested upon the fusion of the Marxist-Leninist discourse and ethnic nationalism in the name of anti-colonial struggle in the 1980s and 1990s. In the early 1980s, the illegal wing of the Kurdish movement, PKK, firstly targeted local feudal landlords and tribal chiefs who exploited Kurdish peasants. These initial attacks made the movement appealing for poor Kurdish masses (primarily Kurdish peasants) in the eastern and southeastern provinces (Romano, 2006, pp. 73-74). The PKK defined its struggle as a way out of feudal subordination for ordinary Kurdish peasants (Keyder, 2004). PKK's entrepreneurs first turned to the family and kinship networks for recruitment. Romano (2006) claims that from its foundational years onwards Kurdish movement relied upon the networks of family and kinship –as one family member participating

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those who are not objectively deprived often feel that they are. It is the contextual and flexible nature of social comparisons that remind researchers that RD and injustice are not the property of a single person or group but rather the property of particular relationships. (Smith et al., 2012, p. 220)

in the Kurdish movement affected the decisions of the other members. Kinship communities and networks in the villages became the primary resource for the movement. Nonetheless, it is also known that PKK widely applied fear and intimidation tactics in the region in order to recruit new members (Keyder, 2004; Aras, 2013). In consolidating its hegemony, PKK used numerous disincentives towards the Kurdish people, especially harshly repressed Islamist Kurdish groups living in rural areas. Moreover, PKK resorted to violent techniques in dealing with other contestant Kurdish parties and movements, which refused to obey its hegemony in the region.

In contrast to the movement's illegal wing (PKK), the pro-Kurdish parties defended parliamentarian democracy, human rights, and peace. Therefore, from the 1990s onwards, the pro-Kurdish parties have formed alliances and coalitions with the Turkish leftists. Revolutionary union leaders and leftist intellectuals became natural allies of the pro-Kurdish parties. The alliance between the Kurds and the Turkish leftists have extended beyond elections.

> Since the 1990s, the Turkey Peace Assembly, bringing together human rights activists, journalists, writers, labor unionists, and others, has been serving as a platform for joint collective action; in the 2006 general election, the Thousand Hopes Candidate List served as a platform to re-assemble the Left; and since the early 2000s, activists and politicians of the Kurdish movement have been actively involved with the Global Justice Movement. (Casier & Jongerden, 2012, p. 5)

It is possible to assert that the Kurdish movement has gone through profound transformations in the 2000s. First and foremost, it has changed its discursive framework and repertoires of action. While it "attacked religion as a veil of conservatism and ignorance, which helps keep Kurds in their backward and oppressed condition" in the 1980s and early 1990s, it left the Marxist-secularist articulation behind in the late 1990s and 2000s (Romano, 2006, p. 134). The Kurdish

movement "developed a post-Marxist and engendered political discourse in the 1990s and 2000s and built political alliances with leftist parties while consciously trying not to estrange religious-inspired organizations." (Casier & Jongerden, 2012, p. 1). That is to say, the Kurdish movement has moderated its views on secularism and adopted a more inclusive approach towards religion. According to Çiçek (2016), there is an ideational convergence between pro-Kurdish and pro-Islamist identities.[63]

> The Kurdish movement's recent efforts to build a new policy vis-à-vis Islam, including civilian Friday prayers, opening some political space for the representation of pro-Islamist Kurdish actors, organizing commemorations for Sheikh Said (the quintessential symbol for pious Kurds), increasing use of Islamist language by some influential Kurdish politicians, etc., have helped undermining the influence of AKP's Islamist discourse among conservative Kurds to a significant degree (Çiçek 2013, p. 162).

In the 2010s, the Kurdish movement has moved beyond identity politics to "assemble Kurdish identity demands into a project of radical democracy" (Akkaya & Jorgenden, 2012, p. 13). In this period, by incorporating diverse leftist, feminist, LGBT and minority groups, HDP has become a truly progressive movement party like its counterparts in Europe. Yörük (2018) defines the HDP as "the largest radical left political movement in Turkish history" (p. 1).[64]

By adopting the ideal of "democratic autonomy", HDP (and the Kurdish movement as well) has tried to strengthen local governments and to enable grassroots democratization (Çiçek, 2016, p. 6). In the 2010s, the Kurdish movement has

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[63] However, this ideological convergence is indeed not new, as the Kurdish nationalist and religious movements had intertwined in the past (Olson 1989). During the Sheikh Said rebellion in the 1920s, Kurds articulated their ethnic demands through religious frames.

[64] "HDP is a union of Kurds, socialists, and the new social movements. It is part of the wave of new left parties in the Mediterranean, which includes Syriza and Podemos. But the HDP is also unique. It is extremely rare that an ethnic minority becomes the political leader of the radical left across an entire country. Indeed, the HDP emerged when the Kurdish political movement fundamentally changed its strategy. Most Kurds now think that the Kurdish question cannot be solved by struggling for a separate Kurdish state. Rather, the prevailing strategy among Kurds is radically transforming the state of Turkey toward decentralization, democratization, and anticapitalism. To achieve this project of 'democratic autonomy,' Kurds have allied with socialists, feminists, LGBTQ people, youth, environmentalists, and other religious and ethnic minorities" (Yörük, 2018, p. 1).

embraced anti-capitalist articulations in order realize the democratic autonomy project and proposed bottom-up solidarity-based economic system through grassroots councils, cooperatives, and assemblies, and it prioritized Marxist use-value and self-actualization instead of the hegemonic principles of capitalist market economy (Yörük, 2018). In this period, HDP's main discursive framework is based on grassroots democracy, economic justice, and human rights, and through this framework, it has garnered considerable support from not only Kurdish working-class but also Turkish middle-class as well.

Recalling the RM perspective, poor Kurdish migrants living in the peripheries of western metropolises have become the main constituent of the pro-Kurdish parties. In other words, the neighborhoods of "Kurdish informal proletariat" in the metropolises have been stronghold for the pro-Kurdish parties. This can be interpreted as an "unintended consequence" of the forced migration of the 1990s (Yılmaz, 2014). Yörük (2014) suggests that "internal displacement has radically changed the class structure of Turkey and the ethnic composition of the working class" (p. 237). The Kurdish movement and its political parties carried out grassroots mobilization among the "Kurdish informal proletariat" in the metropolises in the 1990s and 2000s (Yörük, 2018). In this period, pro-Kurdish parties and associations, along with the leftist movements, mobilized the Kurdish poor in the urban peripheries. Kurdish informal proletariat in the slums of major cities performed political activism through uprisings and protests and became a challenging political actor in the eyes of the state authorities, especially regarding examples of the Gazi neighborhood riots in 1995 and the massive suburban riots on May 1st 1996 (Yörük, 2018). In the 2000s and 2010s, the pro-Kurdish parties have continued to be very powerful in peripheral and deprived areas of Istanbul, where Kurdish migrants were

concentrated, such as Bağcılar. The spatial concentration of Kurdish migrants has made their parties contentious actors over urban space. For instance, in the case of Mersin, the pro-Kurdish parties (BDP and HDP) became influential contentious actor and resisted Turkish nationalists, and won some local municipalities (Yılmaz, 2014).

The Kurdishness of "new urban poverty" had both advantages and disadvantages in terms of political mobilization of the pro-Kurdish parties in the 1990s (Yılmaz, 2008, 2014). On the one hand, leftist articulations of the pro-Kurdish parties resonated with the actual material deprivation and habitus of the Kurdish informal proletariat, on the other hand, because of their overwhelming poverty, the pro-Kurdish parties had hardships in obtaining financial resources from their electorate until the 2000s. Nevertheless, class mobility of Kurdish segments has gained momentum since the 2000s. Some Kurdish segments have achieved upward mobility through the traditional habitus, internal family solidarity, child labor, informal economic activities and increasing access to education (Yılmaz 2014). While some Kurdish migrants have been able to extract financial resources of urban capitalism, others (especially from second-generation migrants) have attained cultural capital through higher education.

In terms of resources, two Kurdish segments are very important to the HDP: Kurdish shopkeepers, tradesmen and businessmen (i.e. pettybourgeoise and bourgeoise) and young-educated Kurdish professionals (engineers, architects, lawyers, etc.). Despite being few in numbers, these upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments provide significant financial and human capital to the party. Kurdish petty bourgeoisie have allocated significant amount of material and financial resources to the party. Young-educated Kurdish professionals have begun to be new conveyors of the Kurdish movement in competing with the old revolutionary cadres. In the case of

Diyarbakır, Küçük (2019) indicates that "the emerging Kurdish middle-class" has formed the backbone of the administrative body of the HDP and have been accused of conducting "the saloon politics" and not representing the genuine class demands by the Kurdish poor and working-class (Küçük, 2019). Regarding the divergence of the issue-positions of the Kurdish poor and "emerging Kurdish middle-class" in the urban space, the HDP could not respond to the "economic demands" of the former and the political demands of the latter simultaneously (Küçük, 2018, 2019).

Üstündağ and Yörük (2015) argue that the pro-Kurdish movement parties (BDP and HDP) have not been able to attract all segments of Kurdish poor in urban space – most of whom still support the AKP. The local organizations of BDP and HDP in poor districts of western metropolises are very weak and cannot respond to the actual problems of the Kurdish poor in everyday life. Üstündağ and Yörük (2015) show that, in the eyes of Kurdish poor, HDP exclusively performs "symbolic" (street) protest politics in Istanbul. The party does not pay enough attention get to their material problems – such as unemployment, work insecurity, urban transformation, etc. The Kurdish poor stress the necessity of social projects, such as establishing neighborhood solidarity houses, soup kitchens, daycare centers, or by organizing youth meetings, seminars, educational and cultural activities. While prioritizing the identity politics, HDP has sometimes lost its connections with the Kurdish poor.

The cultural framing of the Kurdish movement and the pro-Kurdish party are at least as much significant as the grievances of Kurdish people. It is the "grievance framing" of the pro-Kurdish parties that their mobilization in urban space.[65] The

[65] "[Political mobilizations] require nourishment in the form of grievance framing. An antecedent structural variable such as gross disparities in standards of living between groups only gains salience when it is perceived by the relevant actors. In effect, Gurr's notion of relative deprivation only exists when the deprived believe it exists (otherwise we may refer to simple deprivation), and movement

Kurdish movement party has deployed diverse discursive frames, repertoires of action and symbolic resources in order to attract Kurdish people: It has constructed a Kurdish historiography involving myths of origins (e.g. the Medes state and Newroz celebration) and myths of resistance and sacrifices (e.g. Haki Karer, Masum Korkmaz, Mazlum Doğan) and carried out everyday performances and narratives through folk music, poetry, novels and memoirs (Güneş, 2013a; Casier and Jorgenden, 2013). In addition, the network of community organizations, cultural centers,[66] and magazines that was founded and supported by the Kurdish movement have given rise to the "Kurdish cultural revival" and became effective on the urban-educated Kurdish segments in the 1990s and the 2000s (Güneş, 2013a). Moreover, Kurdish media outlets (TVs and newspapers) have been effective in the dissemination of the Kurdish cause among both the dissident Kurdish and Turkish audiences: especially *Özgür Gündem* (newspaper) and *Med TV* provided a communicative space for the Kurdish mobilization (Romano, 2006, p. 169).[67] They became major cultural toolkits in the formation of ethnic consciousness among ordinary Kurdish citizens.

As it is discussed previously, the political frames of the pro-Kurdish movement parties, which are mainly based upon "democracy" and "human rights," instead of more "radical" and "revolutionary" articulations, became effective in widening the electoral Kurdish base in the 1990s and 2000s.[68] As a matter of fact, the Kurdish movement itself left the Marxist-Leninist frames behind in this period. With

activists often play a major role in fostering such perceptions." (Romano 2006, 136)

[66] *Mesapotamia Cultural Center* (MKM) is one of the main representatives of Kurdish cultural revival. The MKM model set an example to many pro-Kurdish cultural centers in Istanbul's peripheral areas, such as Bağcılar, which continue to be effective on political mobilization.

[67] *Özgür Gündem* was founded in 1992 in Istanbul. *Med TV* station was founded in 1994 in London.

[68] In 2004, Kurdish movement declared that it left struggling for separate Kurdish state and instead aims to build "democratic society" and "democratic autonomy" (Romano 2006, pp.145-146).

the introduction of the Islamic frames, the pro-Kurdish movement parties (BDP and HDP) gained further ground among the religious-conservative Kurdish electorate in the 2000s and 2010s. While leaving the secularist and anti-religious articulations behind, the pro-Kurdish movement parties have adopted a democratic understanding of Islam in this period. In this respect, civic Friday prayers organized by the BDP to protest the nationalist discourse of Diyanet, the DİK led by the HDP and relatedly the *mele* organization in DİAYDER can be considered as critical moves of pro-Kurdish movement parties towards the religious-conservative Kurdish electorate.

2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I attempted to outline the relevant literature on cleavage voting, voting behavior and types of political parties (in terms of their linkages and articulations) in the global and local levels. Particularly, I paid attention to class-based cleavages. Starting from the 1970s onwards, with the rise of the neoliberal and postmodern discourses vis-à-vis the fall of working-class politics, global literature predominantly emphasized the relevance of identities and cultural values on political preferences. After the cultural turn, many accounts discussed the rise of post-materialist values instead of structuralist and class-based explanations, which became "the new conventional wisdom." Nonetheless against this wisdom, many recent accounts underline that class-based cleavages continue to be influential on political preferences in Western Europe as well as in Global South. The rising inequality and exacerbating poverty in the last phase of global neoliberalism, particularly after the 2008 financial crisis, once again attract attention to the nexus of class and politics. However, it is necessary to recognize that the "traditional" class-politics configurations have transformed, to large extent, such that the correspondences

between the working-class and leftist parties and between the middle-class and rightist parties have lately blurred. While the expanding precariat (or precarious middle-classes) have supported the new left parties since the 1990s, the poorer and deprived groups who had been disenchanted with the hegemonic narrative of neoliberalism have begun to support the rightist and far-right populist parties.

By surveying the relevant voting and party literatures in Turkey, I discussed the dominant cleavages and issue positions in the country. Until the late 1990s, many studies in Turkey contended that there are deep-rooted divisions among Turkish society between secular-Kemalist elites at "the center" and religious-conservative masses on "the periphery." For a long time, it is assumed that two cleavages have been dominant in the political field of Turkey: center vs periphery and Islam vs secularism. Many studies attracted attention to the class-based dynamics behind the center vs periphery cleavage: religious-conservative masses living on the periphery are mostly poor, whereas secular-elites living at the center are mostly wealthy (upper-and-middle-classes).

Nonetheless, I discussed that the center-periphery relations have become complicated with the electoral hegemony of the AKP, as the party has gained the electoral support of both capitalists and urban poor. While the main constituent of the AKP is the poor and deprived segments in the urban peripheries, some Islamist core segment of the AKP have climbed the social ladder and constituted the new middle-class. On the hand, the Islamist identity and Islamic values of the party, on the other hand, economic development and expansion of welfare provisions are cited as the main factors behind the electoral success of the AKP. Some studies remark that the party has widely used materialist linkages (social assistance, charities and clientelism) in appealing to poor masses; it has a strong organization and grassroots

networks for mobilizing the poor in the urban peripheries. In a similar vein, some studies underline the relevance of economic voting hypothesis, which propounds economic satisfaction and pragmatism of voters, in the success of the AKP.

Departing from my findings, I prefer to conceptualize the AKP as a clientelistic "machine party," and the HDP functions as a contentious "movement party". However, it is necessary to state that both the AKP and the HDP are indeed "movement-born" parties, respectively, their organization are based on the Islamist movement and the Kurdish movement (Krusweska, 2016). By inheriting the grassroots activism and "vernacular politics" of the RP (in the 1990s) on the ground, the AKP emerged with the claim of representing the resentment of poor religious-conservative masses (against the interest of established Kemalist-secularist elites) in peripheries in the early 2000s. On the other hand, by inheriting the tradition of Kurdish movement and pro-Kurdish parties (in the 1990s), the HDP emerged with the claim of representing former grievances of the Kurdish population in the 2010s. However, while the AKP transformed itself into a full-fledged machine party (based on relational clientelism, local brokers, Islamic solidarity and problem-solving networks) in order to continue its hegemony in the 2010s, the HDP has continued to be a movement party by expanding its scope and embracing the agenda of Turkeyification.

In the current literature on the Kurdish voting behavior, most studies attract attention to ethnic consciousness, ethnic identity and ethno-nationalism. Some scholars explain the Kurdish voters support for the pro-Kurdish parties with reference to collective grievances and relative deprivation. For the Kurdish support for the AKP, religion and religiosity are cited as the dominant factors. In addition,

(partial) democratization attempts of the AKP and recognition of cultural rights of Kurdish citizens are also cited in the literature.

I outlined the organizational linkages and political articulations of the AKP and the HDP among the Kurdish electorate in urban space. Based on my fieldwork, which is presented in Chapters 5 and 6, I find out that the AKP is a machine party and the HDP is a movement party. In the machine type of politics, particularistic clientelistic resources and the practices of locally-embedded multi-tasking brokers are significant, whereas, in the movement type of politics, grievances and relative deprivation, resource mobilization, spatial strategies and framing issues come are significant. It is possible to suggest that the pre-requisites of machine politics are poverty and destitution, and the pre-requisites of movement politics are the unresolved (but salient) issues and perception of relative deprivation.

I argued that the AKP's machine linkages and articulations have become influential on the Kurdish poor, while the HDP's movement linkages and articulations have become influential on the upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments. The AKP's success has depended upon its grassroots presence and relational clientelism (involving both redistribution and recognition strategies) and problem-solving networks among the Kurdish poor in the urban peripheries. The HDP's success has depended upon the previous mobilization of the Kurdish movement, framing Kurdish grievances and the effective use of organizational resources.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ON THE KURDISH POPULATION IN BAĞCILAR AND ISTANBUL

3.1 Introduction

For the statistical analysis of the Kurdish political preferences, I use the KONDA dataset, which addresses my research puzzle in many respects, involving the ethnicity parameter as well as demographic, socio-economic and political (voting) indicators.[69] The KONDA research company carries out large-scale (usually nationwide) surveys on a monthly basis and directly asks a question on the ethnicity of respondents (referring to self-designation of ethnic identity) in these surveys.[70] The Kurdish samples drawn from the KONDA dataset have provided important insights about the Kurdish population in Istanbul and in Turkey until recently.[71] In order to investigate the class-based factors behind the Kurdish voting, I will conduct logistic regression analysis on the Bağcılar and Istanbul Kurdish samples of KONDA

[69] It is difficult to find accurate statistics on the Kurdish population and Kurdish political preferences in Turkey. Although the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) collects demographic data through regular address-based population surveys, it does not specifically address an ethnicity question (i.e. ethnic "origins" of respondents). It is known that TUIK used to collect demographic data on ethnic basis through the mother-language question in the 1960s. Recently, TUIK officially declared that they exclude any ethnicity question in order to comply with the EU standards (Yılmaz, 2009). Nonetheless, some researchers still use the TUIK's survey results by assuming the birthplace (whether the respondent was born in eastern and southeastern provinces of Turkey) as a proxy for the Kurdish ethnicity. Other studies on the subject either conduct their own surveys or use the available survey results of the private research institutes and companies.

[70] "The KONDA used the Address-based Population System of the government to select the informants from the entire national population. Then 55,000 neighborhoods and villages were clustered into categories of town, city, metropolis, or countryside to ensure that each subregion of the country has been represented. 874 neighborhoods and villages to visit were selected randomly by computer. Then twelve houses from each neighborhood and village were again selected randomly and quotas for age and gender were applied. The selected informants were older than the age of 18" (Yörük, 2012, p. 524).

[71] One may always question the representativeness of the samples, but it is necessary to remind that the KONDA's Kurdish samples, which are drawn from general nationwide surveys. The Kurdish samples are highly respected among public and academicians and provide evidence for a series of publications, Ağırdır (2008), KONDA (2006) and KONDA (2011).

dataset in the next chapter. Before that, it is necessary to outline these Kurdish samples at the district and urban levels.

In this chapter, by exploring the Kurdish samples, I will introduce the demographic, income distribution, education level, employment status, economic class, political preference, religiosity, residence-type, asset-ownership, social assistance, and financial capability patterns. The robust findings on the subject will be presented in the following logistic regression chapter.

3.2 Descriptive statistics on the Kurdish sample of Istanbul

For the statistical analysis, I pooled the KONDA survey results between 2010 and 2015. In other words, in order to construct the Kurdish sample of Istanbul, I use the aggregated data of the KONDA's 60 consecutive surveys, which are conducted on a monthly basis between 2010 and 2015. In these surveys, there are a total of 38,913 respondents from Istanbul. In the KONDA's total Istanbul sample, 79 percent are Turks, 12.72 percent are Kurds, 0.87 percent are Zazas and the rest of the population are composed of other ethnicities and nationalities. The ratio of Kurds in the total Istanbul sample (including both Kurdish and Zaza categories) is 13.59 percent, which is indeed in line with the previous estimations of the Kurdish population living in Istanbul.[72] The Kurdish sample of Istanbul drawn from the KONDA dataset consists of 5,285 observations.

In terms of the Kurdish population density, Bağcılar ranks first among all other Istanbul districts in 2015. It is estimated that about 12 percent of Istanbul's Kurdish population dwells in Bağcılar. Other districts with the high Kurdish

[72] Tuzla Tersane Araştırma Grubu (2009) estimated that almost 15 percent of the total Istanbul population consists of Kurds. Keyder (2004) estimates that 12 percent of the Istanbul population have Kurdish origins.

population density are, respectively, Küçükçekmece, Bahçelievler, Sultangazi, Esenyurt, and Esenler. This demographic pattern is indeed in line with the recent electoral results, as the HDP gets the highest votes in those districts in Istanbul.[73] The ranking of Kurdish migrants in terms of birthplaces in the Istanbul sample reveals a striking pattern because the Istanbulite Kurds (i.e. Istanbul-born Kurds) turn out to be the largest Kurdish group in the city. Considering a sample of 4,618 observations, 12 percent of Kurds living today in Istanbul were indeed born in the city. Following Istanbulite Kurds, the largest Kurdish migrant groups are respectively from Mardin (8.58 percent), Diyarbakir (7.77 percent), Bitlis (5.63 percent), Van, Ağrı, Batman, Siirt and so on.[74] The high percentage of the Istanbulite Kurds in the Kurdish sample shows that the Kurdish migrants became permanent in the city.[75]

It is not surprising to see that there are two primary political preferences among the Kurdish sample of Istanbul: AKP and HDP. Figure 8 shows the political preferences in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul with 5,285 observations. 33.36 percent vote for the AKP, 32.19 percent vote for the BDP/HDP, and 9.4 percent vote for the CHP. Besides, there is a considerable portion of indecisive voters (14 percent) and abstaining voters (5 percent). As this dissertation concerns the AKP's and HDP's Kurdish voters in Istanbul, the actual sample consists of 3,464 observations.

Through survey results, I find out that that the dominant factor behind the Kurdish voting for the AKP is "the leadership of Erdoğan," whereas the dominant factor behind the Kurdish voting for the HDP is "the ideological commitment" to the

[73] In the 2018 general elections, the HDP gets 22 percent of the votes in Esenyurt, 15,63 percent in Sultangazi, 13,37 percent in Küçükçekmece, 13.35 percent in Bahçelievler, 11,7 percent in Esenler.
[74] Birthplaces of pro-AKP Kurds are respectively Istanbul (12 percent), Diyarbakır (7 percent), Adıyaman (7 percent) and so on, while birthplaces of the pro-HDP Kurds are respectively Mardin (14 percent), Diyarbakır (11 percent), Istanbul (9 percent).
[75] This pattern implies the fact that the Kurdish issue has not been a regional problem anymore like it used to be but turned into a core-metropolitan problem with multiple dimensions since the 1990s.

party in Istanbul.[76] Among the Kurdish supporters of the AKP, 40 percent cited "leadership," 24 percent cited "ideology," 17 percent cited "partisanship" and 18 percent cited "last-minute decision" as the primary reason behind their political preference. Among the Kurdish supporters of HDP, 52 percent cited "ideology," 18 percent cited "partisanship," 18 percent cited "leadership" and 9 percent cited "last-minute decision" as the primary reason behind their political preference.

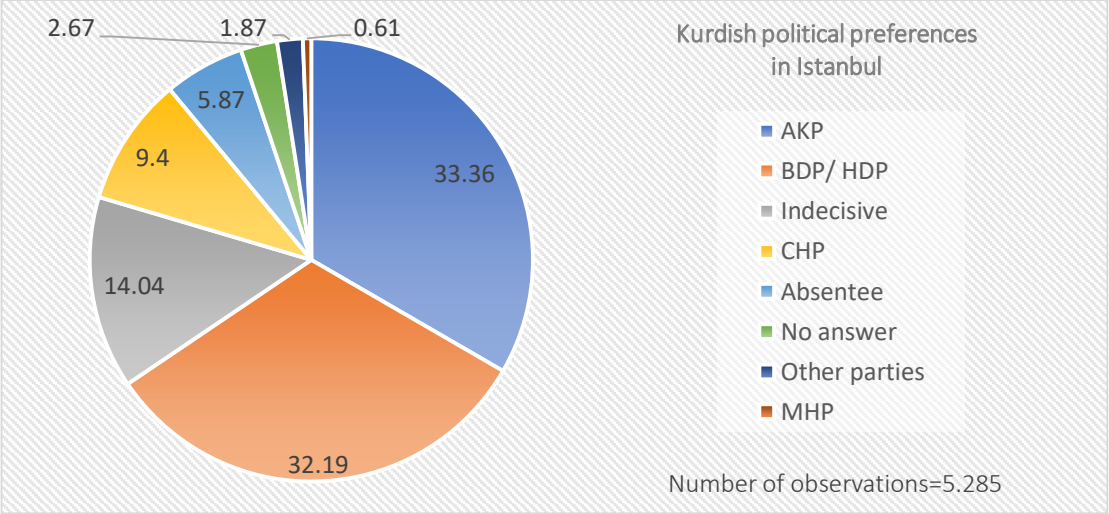

Fig. 8 Kurdish political preferences in Istanbul

In the Kurdish sample of Istanbul, 48 percent are women and 51 percent are men – only about 1 percent did not respond to the gender question. In analyzing the gender distribution of the Kurdish sample in terms of political preferences, it is seen that 54 percent of the pro-AKP Kurds are women and 45 percent are men, whereas 39 percent of the pro-HDP Kurds are women and 61 percent are men. While the pro-AKP Kurds consist of more women, the pro-HDP Kurds consist of more men. This fact implies that, besides the social assistance, the AKP (female) brokers organization among the Kurdish housewives seem to be influential – which will be discussed in the ethnography chapters.

[76] On the question of the reasons on political preferences, there are 734 observations on the pro-AKP identity, 743 responses on the pro-HDP identity.

In addition, 44 percent of the Kurdish sample of Istanbul consists of "youth" (between ages of 18-30), and 56 percent consists of "adults" (older than 30). In analyzing the age distribution of the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in the sample, it is seen that on average pro-HDP Kurds are younger than the pro-AKP Kurds – see Figure 9. It is estimated that the mean age of the pro-AKP Kurds is 36 years old and the mean age of the pro-HDP Kurds is 33.7 years old in Istanbul.[77] It is possible to say that the pro-AKP Kurds are older on average than the pro-HDP Kurds.

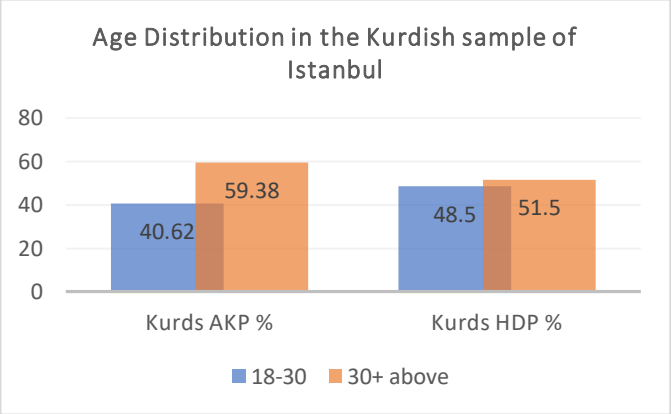

Fig. 9 Age distribution of the Kurdish sample of Istanbul

In the Kurdish sample of Istanbul with 4,780 observations, 84.81 percent are Sunni Muslims (including both Hanafis and Shafiis), 12 percent are Alevis, and 3 percent are from other religions. The vast majority of respondents in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul identify themselves as "religious." In the sample with 5230 observations, 22 percent define themselves as "believers," 59 percent define themselves as "pious," and 14 percent define themselves as "devotee" ("*sofu*"). Only a minority of the Kurdish respondents (5 percent) in the Istanbul sample are identified as "non-believers" (or atheists).

There are some differences between the pro-AKP and the pro-HDP Kurds in terms of religiosity patterns. First of all, the pro-AKP Kurds are more religious on

[77] There are 2,934 observations on the open-ended age question.

average than the pro-HDP Kurds. Figure 10 demonstrates the religiosity patterns of the pro-AKP and the pro-HDP Kurds in the Istanbul sample. The total of "pious" and "devotee" categories account for 88 percent for the pro-AKP Kurds, whereas it is 65 percent for the pro-HDP Kurds. One can hypothesize that Kurds with strong religious beliefs tend vote for the AKP, whereas less religious Kurds tend to vote for the HDP in Istanbul. As it is seen in the figure, more than 8 percent of the pro-HDP Kurds are atheists/non-believers. This is indeed not surprising since the party has Marxist roots and a secular vision in the past.

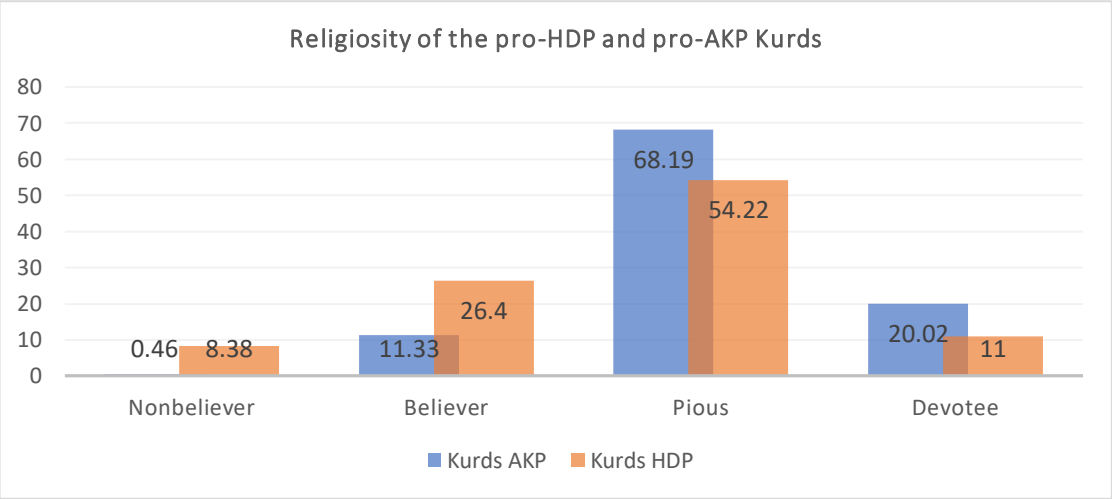

Fig. 10 Religiosity patterns in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul

The comparison of the Kurdish and Turkish samples in terms of household population size shows that Kurdish households are more crowded on average than Turkish households in Istanbul. While the mean household size of the Kurdish sample is 4.93, it is 3.77 in the Turkish sample.[78] More than 35 percent of the Kurdish households live in extended families (6 persons and more), whereas 2 percent of Kurds are single in the city. This pattern confirms the fact that one of the significant survival strategies of the Kurdish households in the urban context is that of the extended family and cohabitation. The extended family principle implies the

[78] On the household size question, there are 2900 observations in the Kurdish sample, and 15.439 observations in the Turkish sample of Istanbul.

possibility of earning more wages and income-pooling within a household, on the one hand, and provides ground for the reproduction of traditional Kurdish habitus in the city, on the other hand (Yılmaz, 2007).[79]

Considering the household size in terms of political preference, the pro-HDP Kurdish households on average are slightly more crowded than the pro-AKP Kurdish households. In the Istanbul sample, the mean household size of the pro-HDP Kurds and pro-AKP Kurds are, respectively, 5.24 and 4.92.[80] Figure 11 shows the distribution of the household population of pro-HDP Kurds and pro-AKP Kurds in Istanbul.[81] Almost 42 percent of the pro-HDP Kurds and 37 percent of the pro-AKP Kurds live in the extended families in the city. Considering the fact that more family members mean higher number of wage earners within household, this discrepancy might bring forward the higher household income for the pro-HDP Kurds.

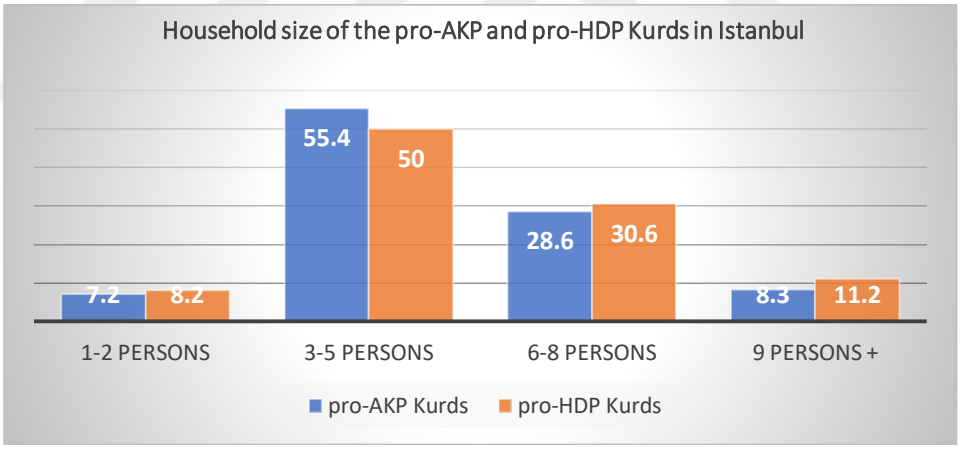

Fig. 11 Household sizes in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul

Regarding income distribution, Turkish sector is clearly better-off than Kurdish sector in Istanbul. For the Turkish sample, the mean household income is

[79] This large household size of Kurds resonates with the popular fear of Turkish nationalists about Kurdish demographics. Turkish nationalists believe that Kurds have "secret agenda" of invading the western Turkey by forming the majority of the population and feel threatened by the fact that Kurds having more children on average than Turks. (Saraçoğlu, 2011, pp. 145-146).

[80] On the open-ended household size question, there are 907 observations for the pro-AKP Kurds and 1037 observations for the pro-HDP Kurds in Istanbul. Kurds supporting other political parties (including CHP) as well as indecisive Kurdish voters have less crowded households compared to the pro-AKP and the pro-HDP Kurds.

[81] On KONDA's clustered household income question, there are 2730 observations in the sample.

2,389 TL and the median household income is 2,000 TL, whereas for the Kurdish sample the mean household income is 2,150 TL and the median household income is 1,750 TL.[82] Therefore, Turks have higher income on average than Kurds in Istanbul. This might be caused by discrimination of Kurds in urban economic processes either through direct discrimination in the labor market or wages disparities (Lordoğlu and Aslan, 2012). This finding is particularly significant in the context of this dissertation because in the ethnographic chapters I will argue that such disparities compounded the feeling of deprivation among dissident Kurds who support the contentious Kurdish political movement.

As it is argued previously, the income indicator should be complemented with other parameters –such as education, asset-ownership and wealth– in order to evaluate the class status. KONDA constructed its own composite class measure by integrating the household income, household size and auto-ownership indicators in the post-survey process. Figure 12 shows the classes of Turkish and Kurdish samples of Istanbul drawn from the KONDA dataset.[83] It is seen that there is a remarkable discrepancy between Turkish and Kurdish sectors. According to the KONDA's class index, Turks are clearly located at the upper echelons of class hierarchies than Kurds in the city. While 20.4 percent of Kurds are from "low-income" groups, it is only about 7,5 percent for Turks. In the "high-income" category, the discrepancy between Turks and Kurds becomes twofold – about 16 percent of Kurds and 32 percent of Turks are from the "high-income" group. Almost half of the Turkish sample involve

[82] On the open-ended household income question, there are 23.293 observations in the Turkish sample, and 4170 observations in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul. Considering the skewness in income distributions, the median income is expected to be more suitable measure for comparing income levels.

[83] On the economic class parameter, there are 12.000 observations for the Turkish sector and 2323 observations for the Kurdish sector in Istanbul.

higher-and-middle income groups, whereas 67 percent of the Kurdish sample consists of lower-middle and low-income groups.

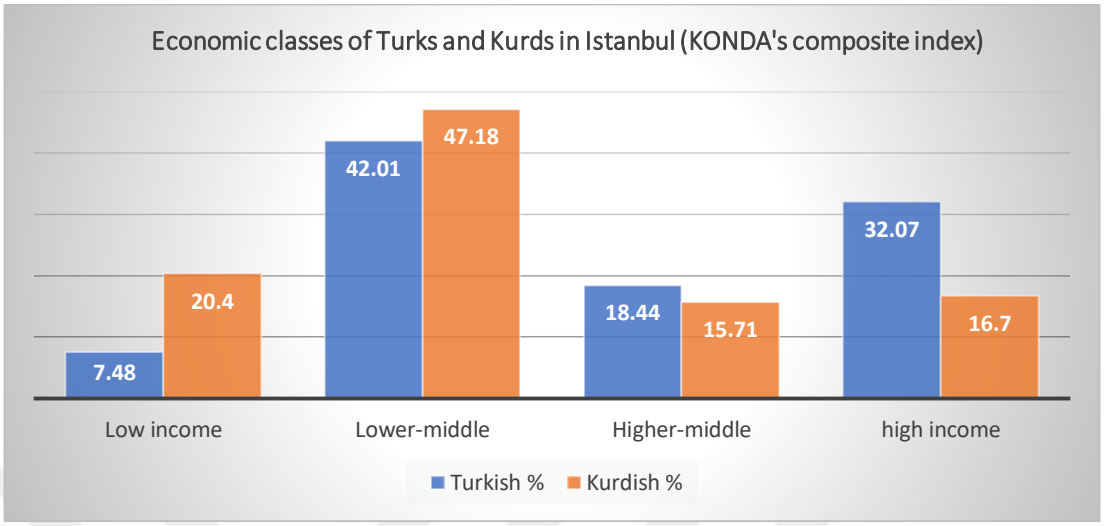

Fig. 12 Economic classes in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul

The apparent discrepancy in terms of socioeconomic status between Turks and Kurds can be attributed to the Turkish bourgeois' exploitation and domination of the Kurdish poor and working-class in the urban context. Nevertheless, as the calculation of this composite measure seems complicated, I rather suggest using income, education and financial capability indicators in measuring class.

In order to conduct a fine-grained analysis of the socioeconomic status, I construct my own income categories based on the open-ended income question in the KONDA survey. The household income distribution in Figure 13 takes the minimum wage, hunger threshold and poverty line as reference points. In the survey years between 2010-2015, the average minimum wage is 770 TL, the average hunger threshold is 1,132 TL and the average poverty line is 3,581 TL.[84] In the Kurdish sample of Istanbul, it is estimated that about 7 percent live below the minimum wage, 26 percent live below the hunger threshold, and 89 percent live below the

[84] The average hunger and poverty thresholds are based on the estimates of DİSK. The net minimum income is 646 TL in 2010, 659 TL in 2011, 701 TL in 2012, 773 TL in 2013, 846 TL in 2014, and 1000 TL in 2015.

poverty line.[85] Only 11 percent of the Kurdish population has decent life standards above the poverty line and only about 4 percent have higher income levels (i.e. more than 5,000 TL) in Istanbul. These patterns show that majority of Kurdish population living in the city are poor.

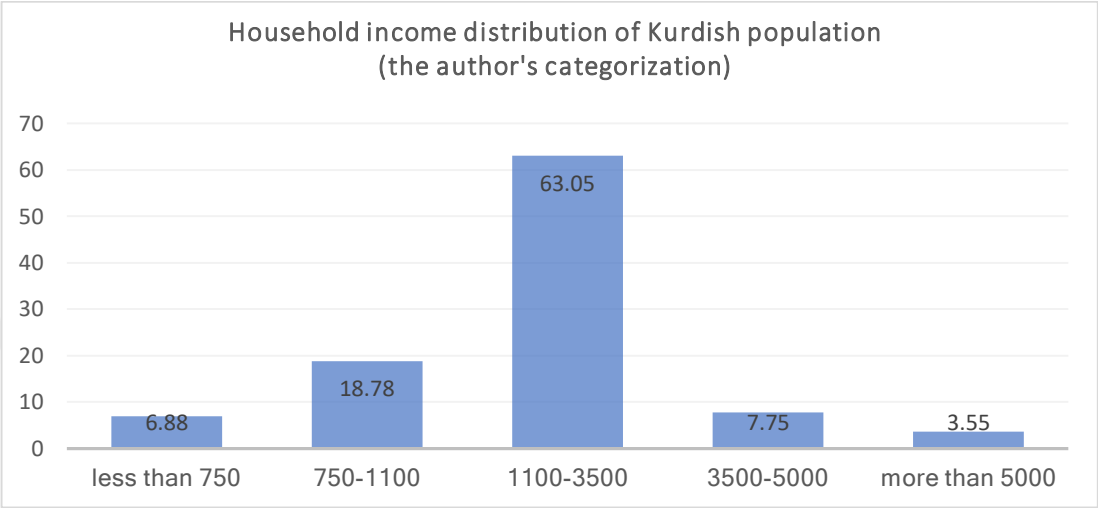

Fig. 13 Household income distribution in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul

As it is discussed before, in terms of political preferences, the pro-HDP Kurds on average have higher household income than the pro-AKP Kurds in Istanbul. There is a considerable discrepancy between these two groups. From the Kurdish sample of Istanbul, it is estimated that the mean household income of the pro-AKP Kurds is 2,049 TL, whereas the mean household income of the pro-HDP Kurds is 2,380 TL.[86] After eliminating the outlier figures that are below 400 TL and above 10,000 TL, the mean household income of the pro-AKP Kurds is 2,016 TL, and mean household income of the pro-HDP Kurds is 2,343 TL.[87] The median income patterns among the two groups reveal a more striking discrepancy. While the median income of the pro-HDP Kurds is 2,000 TL, the median income of the pro-AKP Kurds is 1,500 TL in

[85] On the open-ended household income question, there are 4.170 observations in Istanbul.
[86] There are 1.316 observations for the pro-AKP Kurds and 1462 observations for the pro-HDP Kurds.
[87] After eliminating outliers, the former decreases to 1.275 and the latter decreases to 1.434 observations.

Istanbul. There is 500 TL discrepancy between the two groups. Despite the general poverty condition, the pro-HDP Kurds are more advantageous.

Figure 14 is based on the KONDA's own income categories and shows the income distribution of the pro-AKP and the pro-HDP Kurds in the Istanbul sample.[88] As it is seen in the graph, the frequency of the pro-HDP Kurds is higher than the pro-AKP Kurds in the higher income categories.

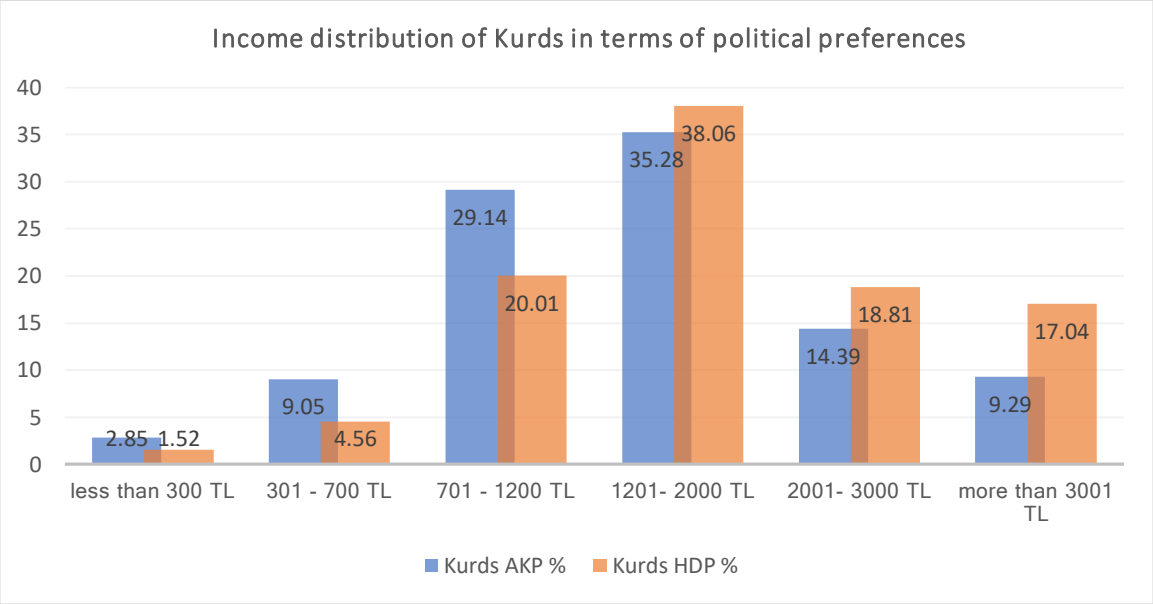

Fig. 14 Income distribution in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul

Despite the general condition of Kurdish poverty, there is higher incidence of higher income among the pro-HDP Kurds compared to the pro-AKP Kurds. Considering the fact that income is a strong class proxy in the stratification approach, pro-HDP Kurds have higher socioeconomic status than pro-AKP Kurds. This economic disparity can also be observed through the KONDA's own composite class measure. Figure 15 shows the economic classes within the pro-AKP and the pro-HDP Kurdish samples according to the KONDA's composite index. There is higher

[88] There are 1.647 and 1579 observations respectively for the pro-AKP Kurds and pro-HDP Kurds.

frequency of the pro-AKP Kurds in the lower-income and the low-income categories, and higher frequency of the pro-HDP Kurds in the high-income category.[89]

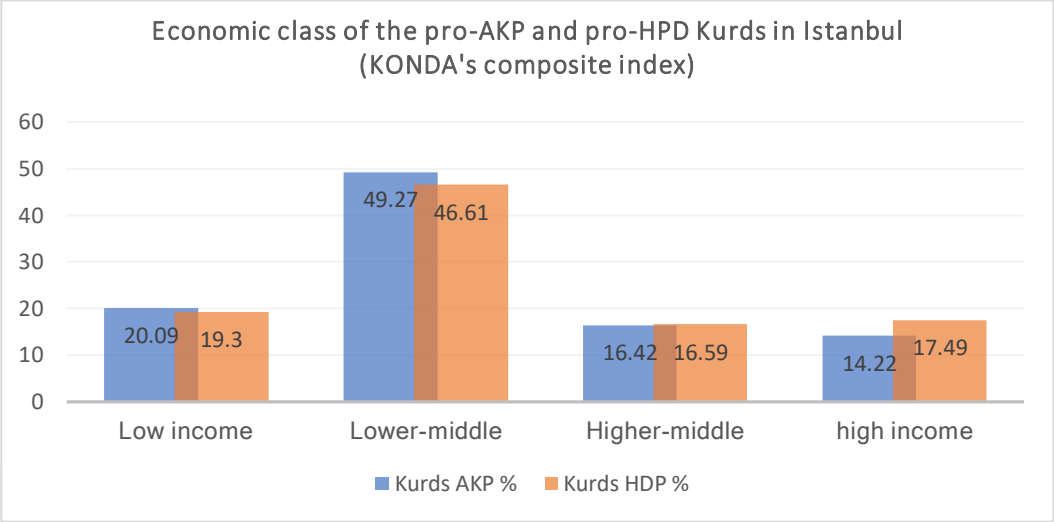

Fig. 15 Economic classes of the AKP and the HDP Kurds in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul

In order to test the income- and class-discrepancy between these two electoral groups, I constructed my own categories based on the open-ended income indicator in the KONDA survey. Table 8 shows that, in comparative terms, the pro-AKP Kurds are from lower income groups, whereas the pro-HDP Kurds are from higher income groups. Reminding that the poverty threshold is about 3,500 TL in the survey years (between 2010-2015), 9 percent of the pro-AKP Kurds and 15.2 percent of the pro-HDP Kurds earn above the poverty threshold. The latter group has more advantageous position in the urban class hierarchies.

Table 8. Income groups among the AKP and HDP Kurds in the Istanbul sample

Income groups	pro-AKP Kurds	pro-HDP Kurds
less than 750	9.04	4.72
750-1100	20.52	15.05
1100-3500	61.4	65.05
3500-5000	6	10.6
more than 5000	3.04	4.58
Total	100	100

[89] On the economic class question, there are 682 observations for the pro-AKP Kurds, and 886 observations for the pro-HDP Kurds in Istanbul.

In the stratification approach (and structuralist perspectives), another indicator of class is education. It is not surprising to see that Turkish sector is more educated on average than Kurdish sector in Istanbul.[90] According to the KONDA's education scale, the mean educational attainment in the Turkish sample is 4.2, whereas the mean educational attainment in the Kurdish sample is 3.65 in Istanbul.[91] This difference corresponds to almost 2-3 years of more schooling for the Turkish sector in the city. While about 16 percent of the Turkish sector got a university degree, it is 9 percent for the Kurdish sector. This educational discrepancy may be attributed to the former discrimination as well as current inequalities that Kurds face in the urban setting because Kurdish migrants often had no chance but to send their children to work at an early age.

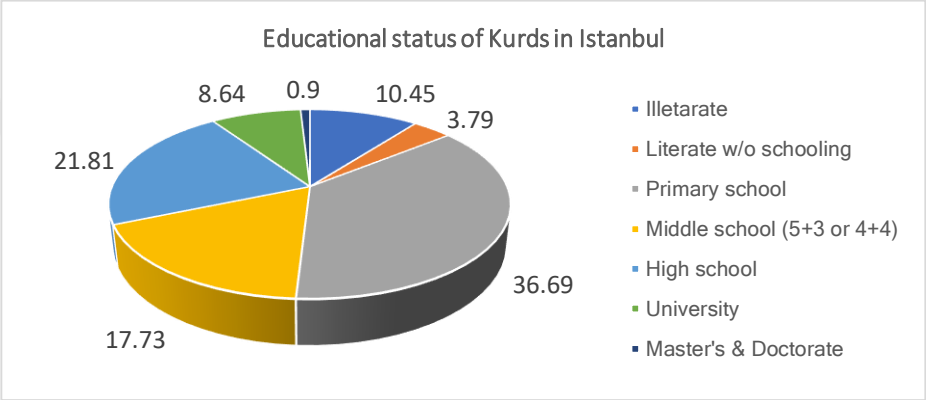

Fig. 16 Educational status in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul

As shown in the Figure 16, 11 percent are illiterate, 4 percent are literate without schooling, 37 percent are primary school graduates, 18 percent are middle-school graduates, 22 percent are high-school graduates, 9 percent are university graduates, less than 1 percent have master's and doctoral degrees in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul. One may conclude that, compared to Turks, Kurds face unequal

[90] On the education question, there are respectively 30,775 and 2,323 observations in the Turkish and Kurdish samples of Istanbul.
[91] In the survey, education scales from 1 to 7: 1 is illiterate, 2 is literate, 3 is primary school graduate, 4 is middle school graduate, 5 is high school graduate, 6 is university degree, 7 is M.A./Ph.D. degree.

opportunities in accessing education in the city. This educational discrepancy might trigger their feeling of "the relative deprivation" among Kurdish people.

In terms of political preferences, the pro-HDP Kurds are on average more educated than the pro-AKP Kurds in Istanbul. In the scale mentioned above, the mean of the educational attainment is 3.39 for the pro-AKP Kurds and it is 3.82 for the pro-HDP Kurds, which corresponds to one extra year of schooling for the latter group. Figure 17 illustrates the educational attainment of the pro-HDP Kurds and the pro-AKP Kurds in the Istanbul sample.[92] While the pro-AKP Kurds are only better-off in the level of primary school, the pro-HDP Kurds are more advantageous in all other education categories. In addition, the percentage of illiterates is way higher among the pro-AKP Kurds. Recognizing that education is a strong proxy to class, it is possible to argue that the pro-HDP Kurds have more chances of upward mobility than the pro-AKP Kurds. This result brings forward more skilled labor force and higher probability of upward mobility among the pro-HDP Kurds because education is still a vital human/cultural capital.

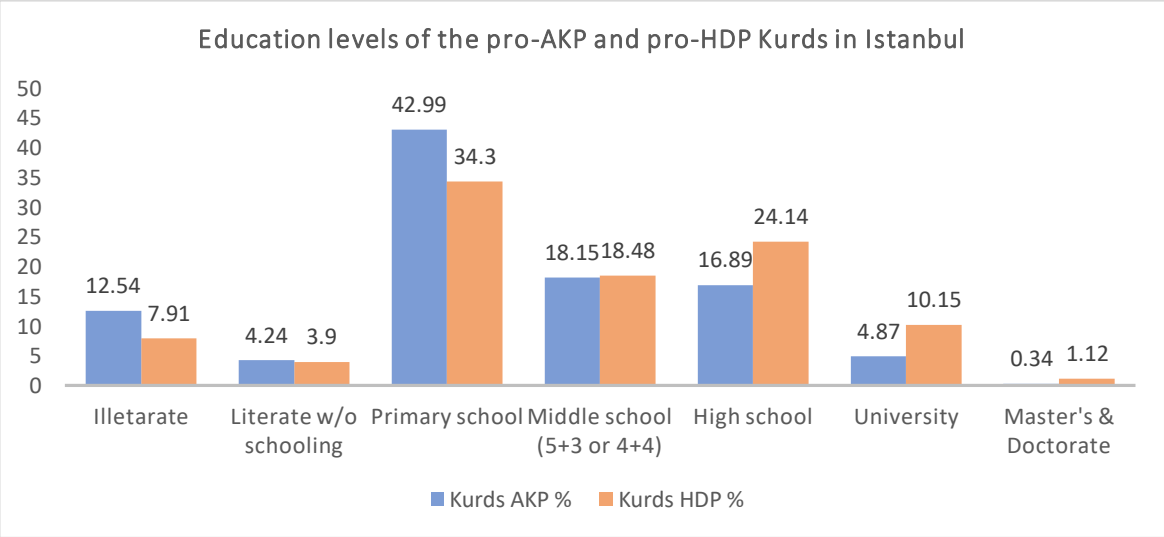

Fig. 17 Educational attainment of the AKP and the HDP Kurds in the Istanbul sample

[92] On education, there are 1,747 observations for the pro-AKP Kurds and 1,694 observations for the pro-HDP Kurds in Istanbul.

As discussed previously, occupational status can be considered as a convenient tool for understanding of class positions. Table 9 shows the occupational status in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul. It is observed that the first ranking group is the housewives (unpaid family workers).[93] This pattern implies that, in general, the labor force participation of Kurdish women is limited.[94] It is estimated that while 70 percent of Kurdish women in Istanbul are either unemployed or out of labor force, 7 percent of them are students, and 6 percent are manual workers. The second largest group in the sample are "workers" (presumably, manual laborers) – i.e. 18 percent. Because of the lack of necessary skills, the significant part of the Kurdish migrant population had no other chance but had to work as manual laborers to ensure their livelihoods in the 1990s in the city.[95]

Table 9. Occupations in the Kurdish sample

Occupational Status		Percentage	
Housewife		33	
Worker		18	
Shopkeeper/craftsman (petty bourgeoisie)		7.2	
Private sector employee		5.8	
Public civil servant		2.2	
Educated professional (doctor, architect, lawyer, etc.)		1.8	
Businessman/tradesman/industrialist		1.1	
Retired		5.2	
Student		7.9	
Unemployed		6.1	
Disabled (cannot work)		1.4	
Farmer/agriculturalist		0.3	
Marginal sector (Informal sector)		0.2	
Other		9.8	
Total		100	

[93] On the employment question, there are 5,263 observations in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul.
[94] The rate of "unemployed" housewives is indeed very high among the Turkish sector as well, which is 30 percent in Istanbul sample. The general female labor force participation rate in Turkey is less than 30 percent.
[95] The percentage of workers in the Turkish sample is lower than the Kurdish sample in Istanbul.

Nonetheless, as it is seen in the table, there is also considerable amount of professionals and white-collar workers (total 8 percent) among the Kurdish electorate in the city – private sector employees are 5.8 percent and public sector employees are 2.2 percent. It is not surprising to see that the percentage of Kurds working in the public sector is lower than the Turks (3.73 percent) in Istanbul, which might uncover the discrimination that Kurds facing in public employment. In addition, there is a small but discernible percentage of Kurdish middle-class (total 9 percent) in terms of occupation: petty-bourgeoisie is 7.2 percent and educated professionals is 1.8 percent.[96] Last, the Kurdish capitalist class is very small – only 1 percent.

It is necessary to draw attention to two patterns pertaining to the occupational status. First, the unemployed category in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul seems very low (6,1 percent), especially comparing the actual rate of unemployment, which is usually above 12 percent, in the survey years under consideration. Regarding this figure, one could argue that Kurds having access to informal economy and basic manual jobs become not unemployed. Especially, there is always a demand for manual laborers in the labor-intensive construction and textile sectors. Nonetheless, this figure still underestimates the actual unemployment rate, and hence should be taken cautiously. Secondly, the marginal sector in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul seems very low, 0.2 percent. It may be the case that Kurds working in the informal jobs avoid responding to the employment question – which may be confirmed by "the other" category, almost 10 percent. We may argue that the informal sector among the Kurdish sample is above 10 percent. Nonetheless, it is hard to figure out the extent of informal employment.

[96] The percentage of shopkeepers is 5.53 percent and the private employees is 9.82 percent among the Turkish sample in Istanbul.

In terms of political preference, there are several critical patterns that need to be scrutinized in the occupational status. Table 10 shows the occupational status of the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in Istanbul. For both groups, it is observed that the most significant constituent is the housewives. About 44 percent of the Kurdish supporters of the AKP are housewives. In fact, the pro-AKP Kurdish women are predominantly housewives (80 percent).[97] The percentage of housewives among the pro-AKP Kurds is much higher than that of the pro-HDP Kurds – i.e. 24 percent. This discrepancy shows that the labor force participation of the pro-HDP Kurdish women is higher than the pro-AKP Kurdish women. The higher participation of the pro-HDP Kurdish women in labor market may increase their average household income and chances for upward mobility.

Table 10. Occupational status of the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in Istanbul

Occupational Status	AKP Kurds	HDP Kurds
Housewife	43.62	24
Worker	16.56	20.75
Shopkeeper/craftsman (petty bourgeoisie)	6.98	9.35
Private sector employee	3.91	5.64
Public civil servant	1.64	2.23
Educated professional (doctor, architect, lawyer, etc.)	1.02	2.4
Businessman/tradesman/industrialist	1.3	1.29
Retired	5.56	4
Student	5.45	9.76
Unemployed	4.99	6.29
Disabled (cannot work)	1.13	1.76
Farmer/agriculturalist	0.23	0.29
Other	7.03	11.7
Marginal sector (Informal sector)	0.11	0.18
Total	100	100

[97] In the sample, the number of pro-AKP Kurdish women is 955, and the number of pro-HDP Kurdish women is 652. The percentage of housewives among the pro-HDP Kurds is very high – 61 percent.

Apart from the housewife category, the first-ranking occupation among both electoral groups is “workers” – the manual laborers. The percentage of the workers among the pro-HDP Kurds is higher than the pro-AKP Kurds, as the labor force participation among the former group is supposed to be higher, which might bring forward higher income levels (and better prospects for upward social mobility) for the pro-HDP Kurds. In a similar line, the percentage of the (more skilled) white-collar workers in the public and private sectors is higher for the pro-HDP Kurds – i.e. 8 percent – than the pro-AKP Kurds – i.e. 5.5 percent. By comparing the total percentages of professionals and shopkeepers, it is possible to argue that the extent of middle-class among the pro-HDP Kurds is higher than the pro-AKP Kurds, respectively 12 percent and 8 percent. The total percentage of these middle-class occupations (professionals, shopkeepers and white-collars) is about 20 percent for the pro-HDP Kurds, and 13.5 percent for the pro-AKP Kurds. Moreover, the higher percentage of shopkeepers might imply the fact that “working-class entrepreneurialism” is more prevalent among the pro-HDP Kurds than the pro-AKP Kurds (Birelma, 2019). Furthermore, the higher percentage of “student” category among the pro-HDP Kurds confirms the fact that the educational attainment among them are higher than the pro-AKP Kurds – which would make the upward mobility more likely. Lastly, the extent of capitalist class is similar for both groups.

As previously underlined, one of the most critical parameters in the KONDA survey is the financial capability indicator, which asks “were you able to make a living last month?” This question not only measures the level of financial capability of households but also their perception and experience of deprivation (i.e. “the

relative deprivation"). Figure 18 summarizes the responses to this question in the Kurdish and Turkish samples of Istanbul.[98]

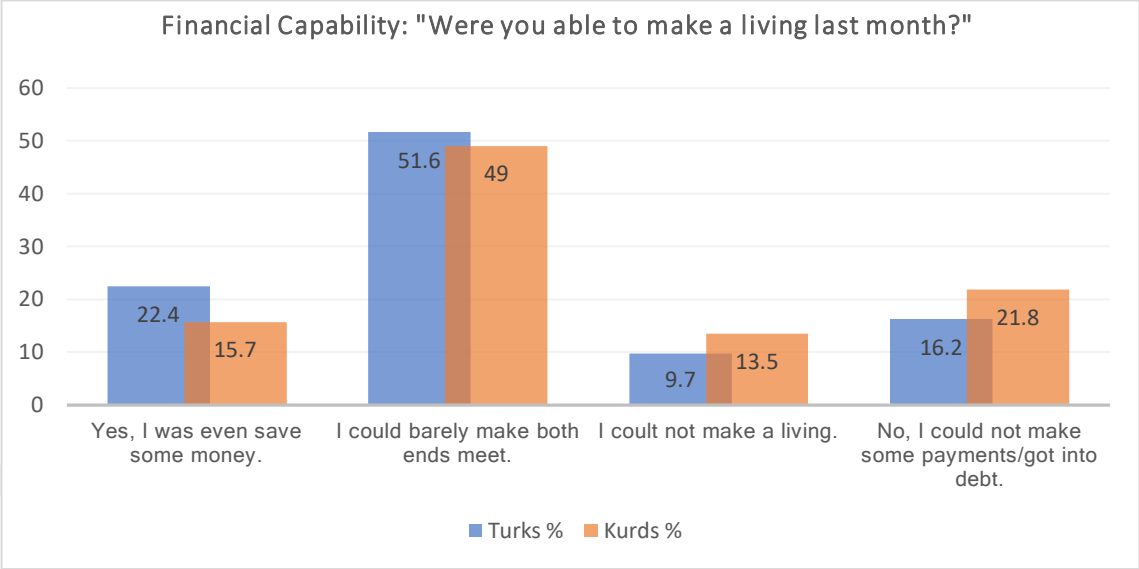

Fig. 18 Financial capability of Turks and Kurds in the Istanbul sample

It is shown that Turkish sector are more satisfied with their financial conditions than the Kurdish sector. It turns out that only 16 percent of the Kurdish respondents are content with their financial status (see category of "Yes, I even saved money" in the graph). About 49 percent of Kurdish respondents declare that they barely made ends meet, 13 percent say that they could not make ends meet, and 22 percent manifest that they could not make some payments and got into debt. It is possible to say that the majority (84 percent) of Kurds living in Istanbul are financially incapable – either they hardly sustained or could not sustain themselves in the previous month. There is a significant discrepancy between Turks and Kurds: While about 28 percent of Turks declare that they either "could not make a living" or "got into debt," this ratio is 45 percent for Kurds. In comparison to Turkish counterparts, Kurds more often declare that they are financially incapable. One may attribute this discrepancy to structural inequalities and ethnic discrimination. This

[98] On the subsistence question, there are 3,666 observations in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul.

discrepancy might over time translate into the heightened feeling and perception of relative deprivation.

In terms of the political preference, the financial capabilities of the pro-HDP Kurds and the pro-AKP Kurds contrast with their household income and education patterns. Although the pro-HDP Kurds on average have higher income and education levels (thus, presumably, they have higher probabilities of upward mobility) than the pro-AKP Kurds, they declare themselves financially worse-off than the latter group in Istanbul.[99] As it is illustrated in Figure 19, there is a striking difference in the first category: while about 25 percent of the pro-AKP Kurds state that "yes, I even saved some money" (the first category), this is less than 10 percent for the pro-HDP Kurds. Likewise, in all other categories, the pro-HDP Kurds declare themselves worse off than the pro-AKP Kurds. Higher percentages of the pro-HDP Kurds declare that they "could not make ends meet" and "got into debt" in Istanbul. The discrepancy between two groups needs to be discussed in relative terms.

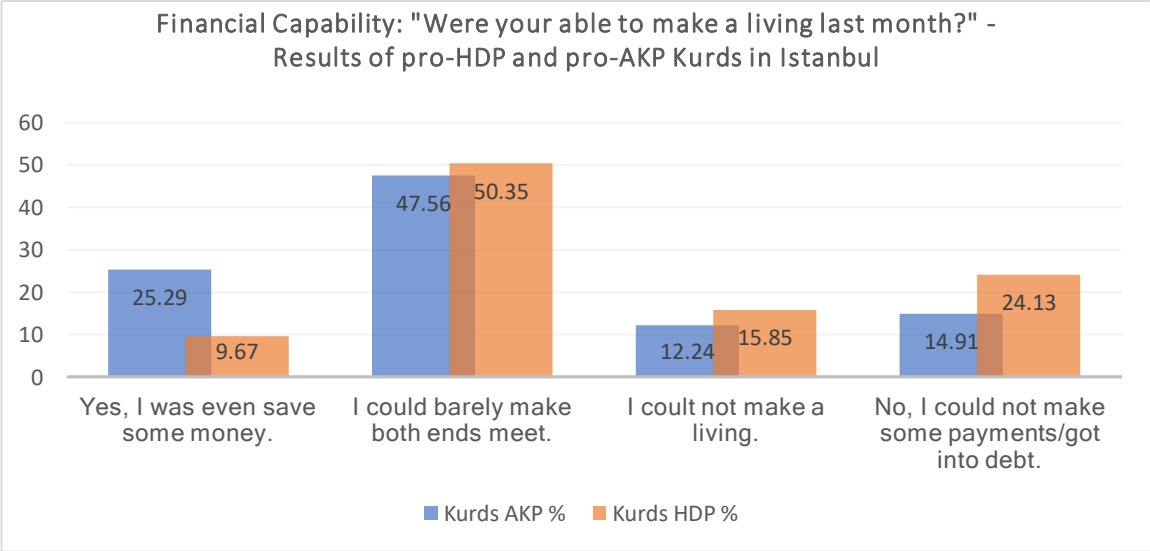

Fig. 19 Financial capability of the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in Istanbul

[99] On the subsistence question, there are 1127 observations for the pro-AKP Kurds and 1293 observations for the pro-HDP Kurds.

One might think that this sort of financial discrepancy can be attributed to the different household income levels and/or household sizes between the pro-AKP and the pro-HDP Kurds. We know that the average household size of the pro-HDP Kurds is higher than the pro-AKP, and the average household income of the pro-HDP Kurds is higher than the pro-AKP Kurds in Istanbul. Thus, the discrepancy in financial capability could not be explained by looking at the contrasting household income levels and household sizes. As previously mentioned, financial capability parameter is based on self-declared welfare evaluations of households, and there by can be interpreted as an indicator of relative deprivation. The relative deprivation is based on the comparison of "the self" with "others." Therefore, while a person may feel satisfied with a minimum income, content with his/her financial conditions, another individual may become dissatisfied with the same conditions, because those are below his/her expectations (i.e. the desired welfare level).

3.3 Descriptive statistics on the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar

As stated previously, I pooled the 60 consecutive survey results drawn from the KONDA dataset between 2010 and 2015 in order to construct the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar. In these surveys, there are a total of 2,481 observations from the Bağcılar district. The ethnic composition of the Bağcılar sample are as follows: 1701 are Turkish, 586 are Kurdish, 27 are Zaza, 35 are Arab and 99 are from other ethnicities. I do not tackle Kurdish and Zaza responses separately and combine these two groups, and thus the Bağcılar sample consists of 613 observations. In this section, I will introduce the descriptive statistics on this sample.

According to the sample, the Kurdish population is highly concentrated in Demirkapı, Evren, Fatih, Kirazlı, and Kemalpaşa neighborhoods in Bağcılar. The

Figure 22 shows the spatial distribution of the Kurdish sample over the Bağcılar neighborhoods. Demirkapı has the largest Kurdish population. This demographic trend is indeed in line with electoral patterns, as the HDP gets largest support from Demirkapı neighborhood –as shown in Chapter 1.

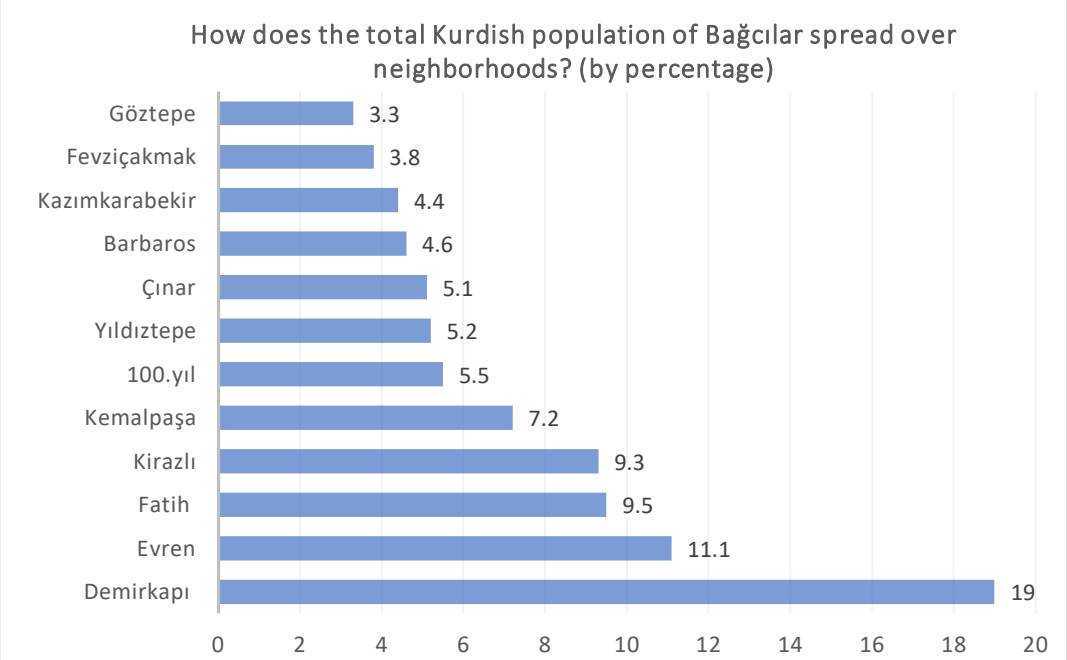

Fig. 20 Spatial distribution of Kurds over the Bağcılar neighborhoods

According to the survey results, the Bitlis Kurds are the first ranking local community. The ranking of the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar in terms of birthplaces shows that large Kurdish groups are respectively from Van, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Batman, Adıyaman, Malatya, Siirt, and Muş.

On the voting question, there are 513 observations of the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar, in which 35.9 percent declare that they would vote for the HDP, and 35.6 percent declare that they would vote for the AKP.[100] Besides, about 5 percent support the CHP, 0.7 percent support the MHP and 1 percent support other parties. Moreover, there are considerable fractions of indecisive Kurdish voters (13 percent)

[100] Based on the survey results, the most significant factors explaining Kurdish voting behavior are respectively ideology (33.7 percent), leadership (26.4 percent) and partisanship (16.7 percent).

and abstaining Kurdish voters (7.6 percent) in the district. The total vote shares of the AKP and the HDP (72 percent) in Bağcılar confirms the fact that these are two dominant political preferences among Kurdish electorate at the local level.

In terms of gender profiles, about 60 percent are men and 40 percent are women in the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar. The gender profiles of the pro-HDP and pro-AKP Kurds in the Bağcılar sample are illustrated in the Table 11. Of the pro-AKP Kurds, 55 percent are women and 45 percent are men, and of the pro-HDP Kurds 40 percent are women and 60 percent are men. In comparative terms, Kurdish women tend to support the AKP and Kurdish men tend to support the HDP.

Table 11. Gender in the Kurdish Sample of Bağcılar

	Pro-HDP Kurds	Pro-AKP Kurds
Women	86 (40 percent)	114 (55 percent)
Men	130 (60 percent)	95 (45 percent)

The mean age in the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar is 34 years old, and the median age is 32 years old (as of 2015). In terms of age distribution, 39 percent are between 18-28 years old, 40 percent are between 29-43 years old, and 21 percent are over 43 years old in the sample. In terms of political preferences, the pro-HDP Kurdish voters are on average younger than the pro-AKP Kurdish voters. The mean age of the pro-HDP Kurds is about 33.5 years old, whereas the mean age of the pro-AKP Kurds is 35.7 years old. As it is shown in the Figure 21, the AKP gets more votes from the Kurdish adults and elderly in Bağcılar.

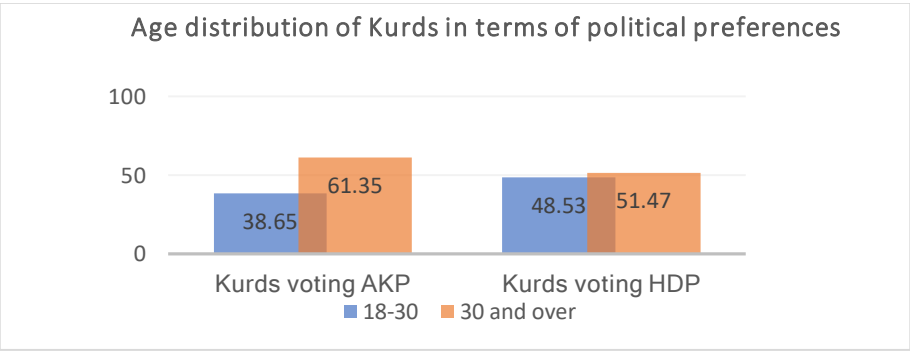

Fig. 21 Age distribution in the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar

For the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar, the average household population size is 5.6 persons, whereas the general household size is about 4.5 persons in the district.[101] It is not surprising to see that the average Kurdish household size is larger than the average Turkish household size (i.e. 4.1 persons) in the district. Based upon the KONDA's own categories, the following graph (Fig. 22) shows the distribution of household sizes in the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar.[102] Almost one-fifth of the Kurdish households consists of extended-families (14 percent have the 6-8 persons, and 5 percent have 9 persons and more). These figures are consistent with the results of the Bağcılar Municipality Survey in 2006, in which the average household size is 4.2.

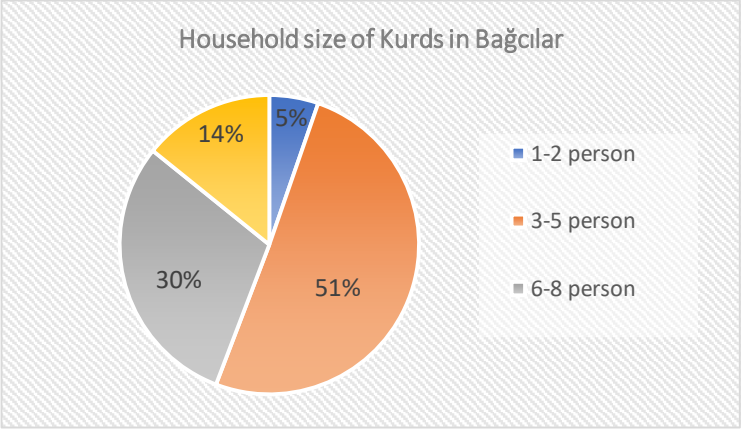

Fig. 22 Household sizes in the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar

Considering the household size distribution of Kurdish households in terms of political preferences, the pro-HDP households are more crowded on average than the pro-AKP households. The mean household size of the pro-HDP Kurds is 6.1, whereas it is about 5.2 for the pro-AKP Kurds. Based on KONDA's own categories, Figure 23 shows the distribution of household size regarding political preferences in

[101] This estimation is based on the 331 observations in the open-ended question household size question in the KONDA survey.
[102] There are 471 observations from Bağcılar on the KONDA's household size (categorical) question.

Bağcılar. While about 52 percent of the pro-HDP Kurdish household have more than 6 persons, it is 40 percent for the pro-AKP Kurds.[103]

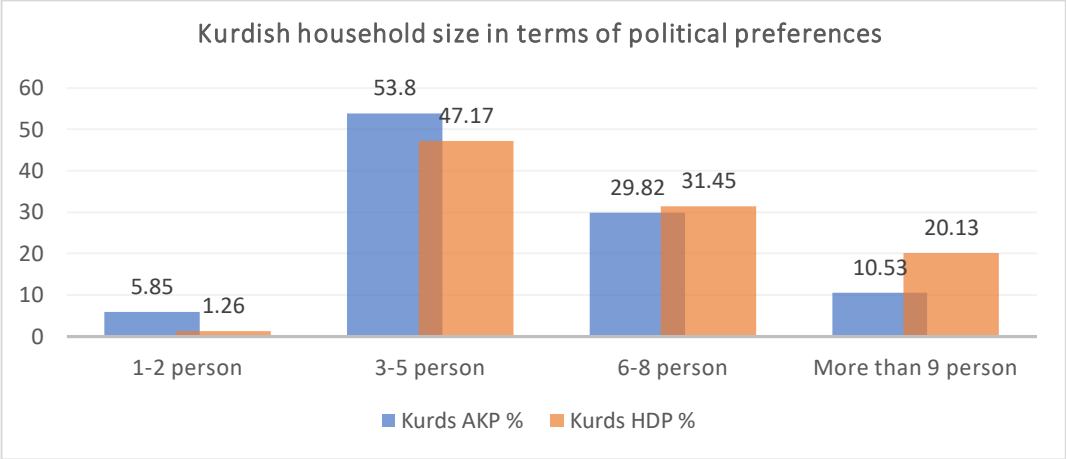

Fig. 23 Household sizes of the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in Bağcılar

In terms of the religion/sect parameter, most of the Kurdish respondents (91.3 percent) in the district are Sunni Muslims, only 7.1 percent of the population consists of Alevis.[104] Nevertheless, the religiosity parameter is more significant than the religion/sect parameter in the survey. As it is seen in Table 12, only a small minority of Kurdish respondents in the Bağcılar sample (14 people) define themselves as "non-believers" (or atheists). Out of 606 respondents in the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar, 89 respondents declare themselves as "believer," 399 respondents are "pious" and 104 respondents are "devotee." All in all, most Kurds in Bağcılar define themselves in one way or another as religious.

Table 12. Religiosity Levels in the Kurdish Sample of Bağcılar

Religiosity	Frequency	Percent
Non-believer	14	2.31
Believer	89	14.69
Pious	399	65.84
Devotee	104	17.16
Total	606	100

[103] This difference implies that the pro-HDP Kurdish households might have higher household income levels than the pro-AKP Kurdish households.
[104] In addition, 0.3 percent belong to other sects of Islam, and 1.2 percent to belong to other religions.

In considering the religiosity patterns of the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar with regard to political preference, it is not surprising to see that the AKP's Kurdish voters are on average more religious than the HDP's Kurdish voters. Figure 24 shows the religiosity patterns among the pro-AKP Kurds and the pro-HDP Kurds in the district. As it is seen, none of the pro-AKP Kurds and only a small fraction of the pro-HDP Kurds (3.23 percent) declare himself/herself as "non-believer" (atheist). Therefore, both groups are mostly religious. Nonetheless, the percentages of pious and devotee catgegories are higher among the pro-AKP Kurds.

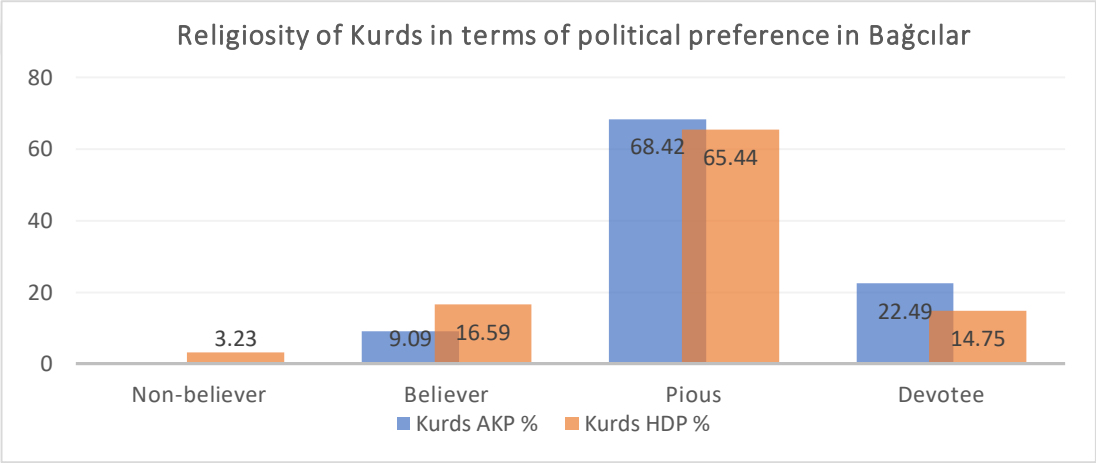

Fig. 24 Religiosity levels of pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in Bağcılar

It is estimated that the vast majority of the Kurdish population in Bağcılar was educated to high school level or below (totally 94 percent). The general educational attainment among Kurds living in Bağcılar is quite low: 10 percent are illiterate and 40 percent are primary school graduates. It is not surprising to see that there is a remarkable inequality in educational attainment (schooling) between Kurdish and Turkish sectors in the district. Regarding the KONDA's educational scale, the mean of educational attainment is 3.89 for the Turkish sector and 3.46 for the Kurdish sector.[105] This difference corresponds to almost one extra year of

[105] In the KONDA survey, the education indicator scales from 1 to 7: 1 is illiterate, 2 is literate, 3 is primary school graduate, 4 is middle school graduate, 5 is high school graduate, 6 is university degree, 7 is master's/doctoral degree.

schooling of the Turkish sector. The percentage of university graduates in the Kurdish sector is low (5.39 percent). It is possible to attribute lower education levels of Kurds to the forced migration in the past and structural inequalities in the present.

Figure 25 shows the educational attainment of Kurds in terms of political preferences at the district level. In general, the pro-HDP Kurds are more educated on average than the pro-AKP Kurds. According to the education scale mentioned above, the mean of educational attainment is 3.52 for the pro-HDP Kurds, and 3.22 for the pro-AKP Kurds. There are two critical divergences in favor of pro-HDP Kurds in the categories of "illiterates" and "high school graduates": the percentage of illiterates is higher among the pro-AKP Kurds, and the percentage of high school graduates is higher among the pro-HDP Kurds. Considering the fact that education (cultural capital) as a proxy to social class, it is possible to claim that the pro-HDP Kurds have higher chances of upward mobility compared to the pro-AKP Kurds.

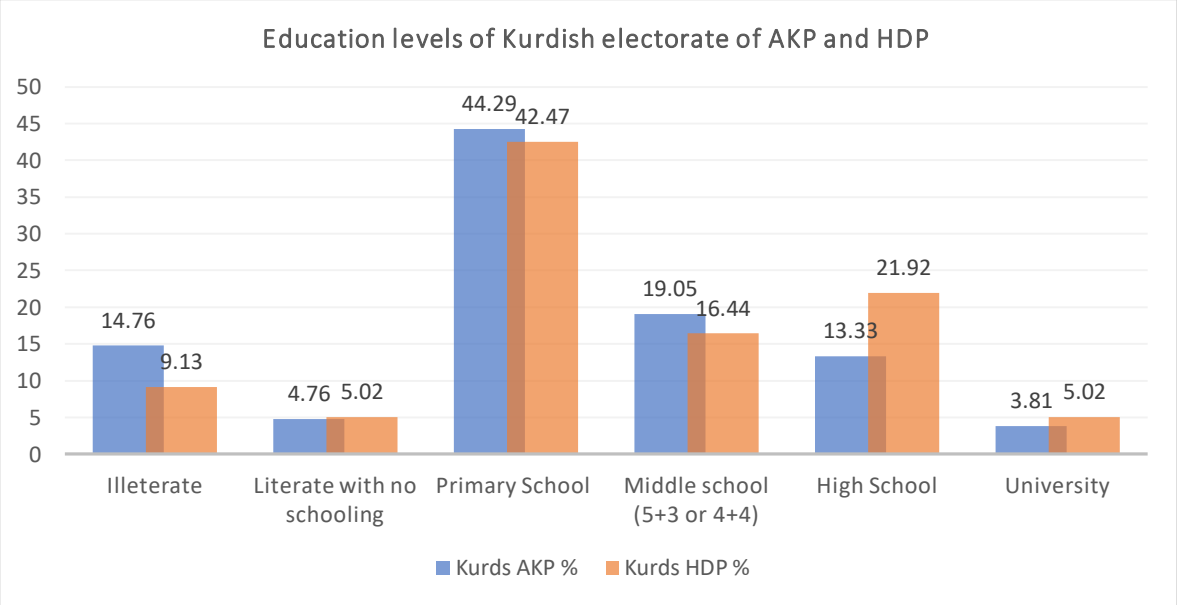

Fig. 25 Education levels of pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in the Bağcılar sample

Based on the KONDA's own occupation categories, the Table 13 shows the occupational status of the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar. There are 611 responses for the occupation question in the Kurdish sample. Similar to the Istanbul figure, the

largest Kurdish constituency in the district is the housewives. The second largest occupational group is the workers (mostly, manual laborers) and the third-largest group is the petty bourgeoisie (shopkeepers and craftsmen) among Kurdish people in the district. There is a small fraction of white-collars among the Kurdish sample – i.e. the total percentage of public servants and private employees is 6.2 percent.

Compared to the Turkish sector, Kurds have unequal access to the public sector jobs, which can be attributed to the structural inequalities or to the discrimination. It is seen that the extent of the marginal (informal) sector is very small (0,3 percent), it might be the case that respondents feel insecure in declaring their informal jobs. Considering that the general figure of informal employment is 46 percent in Turkey (World Bank 2019, p. 8), this marginal (informal) sector figure might not be reliable.

Table 13. Occupational Status in the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar

Occupational Status	Percent
Housewife	37.3
Worker	19.3
Shopkeeper/ craftsman (small business)	7.4
Student	5.6
Private sector employee	4.4
Retired	4.2
Public/civil servants	1.8
Disabled (cannot work)	1.8
Businessmen/tradesmen/industrialists	1.3
Educated professional (doctor, architect, engineer, lawyer, etc.)	0.7
Marginal sector (peddling, housekeeping, etc.)	0.3
Farmer/husbandry/agriculturalist	0.1
Other	9.2
Unemployed (seeking job)	6.5
Total	100

As a matter of fact, the high percentage of the “other” category (9 percent) in the table implies that there is a considerable amount of informal economic activities among Kurds in Bağcılar. Moreover, the unemployment rate among Kurdish people

in the district is quite lower (6.5 percent) than the national average (8-10 percent). One could posit that Kurds having easy access to the informal sector as manual workers usually do not become unemployed: there is always a demand for manual laborers in the construction and textile sectors. Nonetheless, this figure still underestimates the actual unemployment rate.

Table 14 shows the occupational status of Kurdish voters of the AKP and the HDP in the district. Both the pro-AKP Kurds and the pro-HDP Kurds predominantly consist of the housewives (unpaid family workers) and the workers (manual laborers) in Bağcılar. It is seen that Kurdish housewives more often support the AKP in the district. The share of the housewife category is 44 percent for pro-AKP Kurds, 30 percent for pro-HDP Kurds. The percentage of workers are similar for both groups.

Table 14. Occupational Status of the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in Bağcılar

Occupations	Pro-AKP Kurds	Pro-HDP Kurds
Housewife	44,1	30,6
Worker	21,8	20,1
Shopkeeper/craftsman (small business)	4,7	11
Private sector employee	0,9	1,8
Educated professional	0,5	1,4
Businessman/tradesman/industrialist	0,9	1,8
Public/civil servant	2,8	0,5
Student	3,3	11
Unemployed (seeking job)	5,7	5
Retired	2,8	4,3
Others (including informality and “no answer”)	12,5	12,5
Total	100	100

Considering the occupational patterns, it is possible to interpret that both groups predominantly consist of working-class. Nonetheless, the percentages of professionals (doctors, architects, lawyers, engineers, etc.), petty bourgeoisie (shopkeepers and craftsmen), white-collars (private sector employees) are higher among the pro-HDP Kurds than the pro-AKP Kurds – respectively the professionals

are 0.5 percent and 1.4 percent, the shopkeepers are 11 percent and 4.7 percent, and the white-collars are 5 percent and 3.3 percent. Through these figures, it is possible to claim that the extent of middle-class occupations is higher among the pro-HDP Kurds: the total percentage of educated professionals, petty bourgeoisie and white-collars is 13.2 percent for the pro-HDP Kurds and 8.5 percent for the pro-AKP Kurds. The higher percentage of public servants among the pro-AKP Kurds might imply that they more often use the party's patronage relations. Furthermore, despite few in numbers, the capitalist-class is clearly higher among the pro-HDP Kurds than the pro-AKP Kurds. From these figures, one could posit that the former group are located higher in the capitalist hierarchies than the pro-AKP Kurds in the district.

Based on KONDA's own categorization, Figure 26 shows the household income distribution of the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar. It is observed that most Kurdish households (more than 90 percent) live below the poverty line in the district.[106] Most Kurdish households in Bağcılar are poor. Considering the time span of the KONDA surveys between 2010 and 2015, the average household income in the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar was 2,165 TL.[107] In the same period, the average hunger threshold was 1132 TL and the average poverty line was 3,581 TL for a 4-person household.[108] Therefore, it is possible to argue that an "average" Kurdish household in the district lives above the hunger threshold but below the poverty line.

[106] In the KONDA dataset, there are two ready-constructed household income stratification with different categorizations. Although the new categorization is more detailed and updated, the number of observations is far less than the old categorization. There are 486 responses for the 6 income categories in the new one, and 565 responses for the 5 income categories in the old one. Therefore, I use the old categorization.

[107] After eliminating a few outlier observations (household income level more than 10.000 TL), the mean Kurdish household income decreases to almost 1.950 TL in Bağcılar. It is also estimated that on average the Turkish households earn at least 30 TL more than the Kurdish households in the district.

[108] I calculated the average hunger and poverty thresholds based on the estimates of DİSK between 2010-2015. The hunger threshold is 934 TL in 2010, 992 TL in 2011, 1061 TL in 2012, 1121 TL in 2014, 1283 TL in 2014, and 1405 TL in 2015. The poverty threshols is 2952 TL in 2010, 3126 TL in 2011, 3354 TL in 2012, 3544 TL in 2013, 4057 TL in 2014, and 4443 TL in 2015.

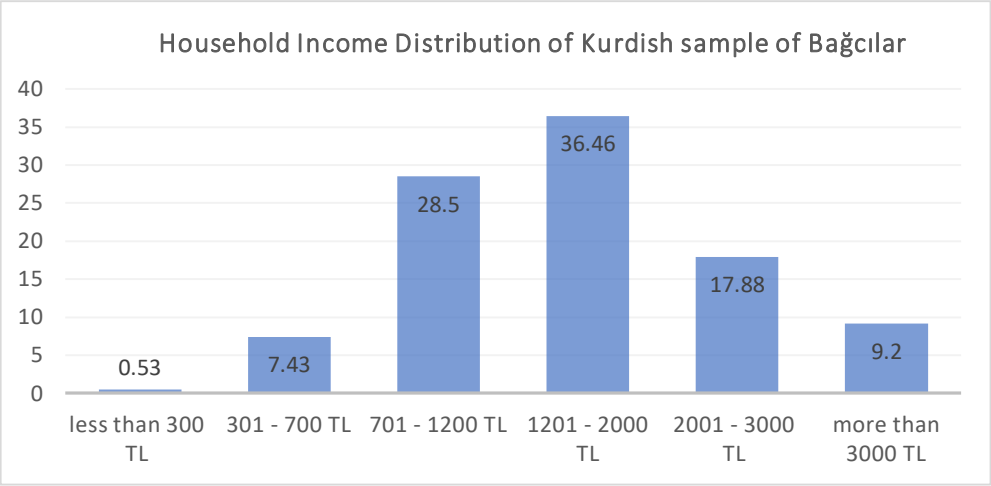

Fig. 26 Household income distribution based on the KONDA's own categories (2010-2015)

In order to conduct a fine-grained analysis, I constructed my own income categories by using the open-ended income question in the KONDA survey. The income distribution shown in the Figure 27 takes the minimum wage, the hunger threshold and the poverty line as reference points. In the survey years between 2010 and 2015, the average minimum wage is 770 TL, the average hunger threshold is 1.132 TL and the average poverty line is 3,581 TL.[109] In the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar, it is estimated that about 6 percent live below the minimum wage, 28 percent live below the hunger threshold, and 91 percent live below the poverty line in this period. Only 9 percent of the Kurdish households have decent life standards (above the poverty line) and only about 2 percent have high-income levels (i.e. more than 5,000 TL) in the district. These patterns confirm that most Kurdish households living in Bağcılar are poor.

[109] The hunger and poverty thresholds are based on the estimates of DİSK. The net minimum income is 646 TL in 2010, 659 TL in 2011, 701 TL in 2012, 773 TL in 2013, 846 TL in 2014, 1000 TL in 2015.

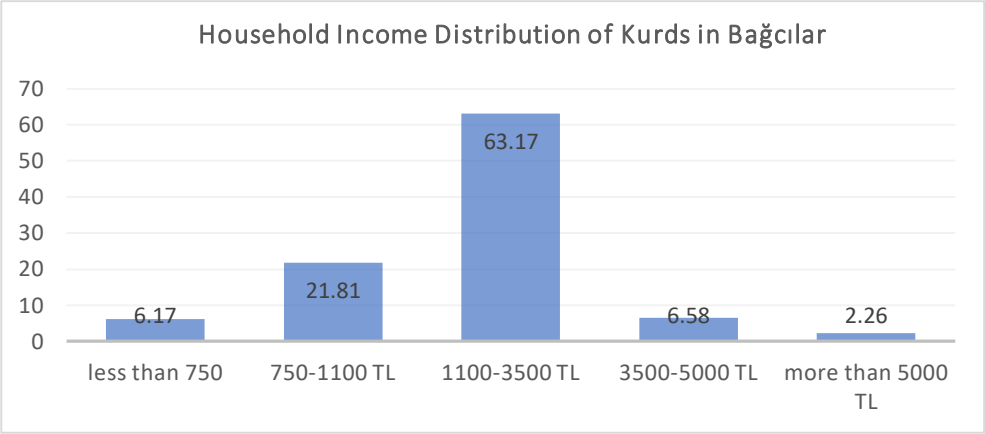

Fig. 27 Household income distribution based on the author's own income categories

At this juncture, it is necessary to remark that, the welfare levels of Kurdish households have slightly recovered in the 2000s and 2010s. The nominal income levels as well as the purchasing power of households have increased in the district. According to the Bağcılar Municipality Survey, the average household income was about 750 TL in 2006, whereas according to the KONDA survey, the average household income of Kurds was 2,584 TL in 2015. As the figure of the Bağcılar Municipality Survey involves both the Turkish and the Kurdish subsamples, we expect that Kurdish households' income levels should be less than 750 TL in 2006.[110] Therefore, income levels have at least tripled in nominal terms between 2006 and 2015, but this improvement cannot be translated into increasing welfare mainly due to the inflation.[111] In order to make better comparisons, we need to analyze the income levels in comparison to the net minimum income. For this purpose, I take the officially announced net minimum income level as a reference point. The nationwide net minimum income was 380 TL in 2006, and 2,584 TL in 2015. In Bağcılar, while the average household income of Kurds was less than twofold of the net minimum income in 2006, it was more than two and a half times

[110] On average the Kurdish households was worse off than the Turkish households because of the discrimination in employment and unequal distribution of resources (especially urban rents).
[111] The inflation rate in 2006 was 9.65 percent and the inflation rate in 2015 was 8.81.

the net minimum income in 2015. We can also calculate and compare the purchasing power parity within the 10 years. One-kilogram meat (carcass) was 10.29 TL in 2006, and 20.50 TL in 2015. With the mean income, an average Kurdish household in Bağcılar could buy 73 kg meat in 2006, whereas they could afford 126 kg meat in 2015. After all, we can argue that the welfare levels of Kurdish households in the district have improved within the 10 years.

Figure 28 is based upon the KONDA's own income categorization and shows the household income distribution of the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar in terms of political preferences. It seems that there is a considerable discrepancy between the pro-AKP and pro-HDP in favor of the latter. The frequency of the pro-HDP Kurds in higher income categories is clearly higher than the pro-AKP Kurds. It is estimated that the average household income of the pro-AKP Kurds is less than the pro-HDP Kurds – in the sample, the average household income is 1,988 TL for the pro-AKP Kurds and 2,225 TL for the pro-HDP Kurds in Bağcılar.[112]

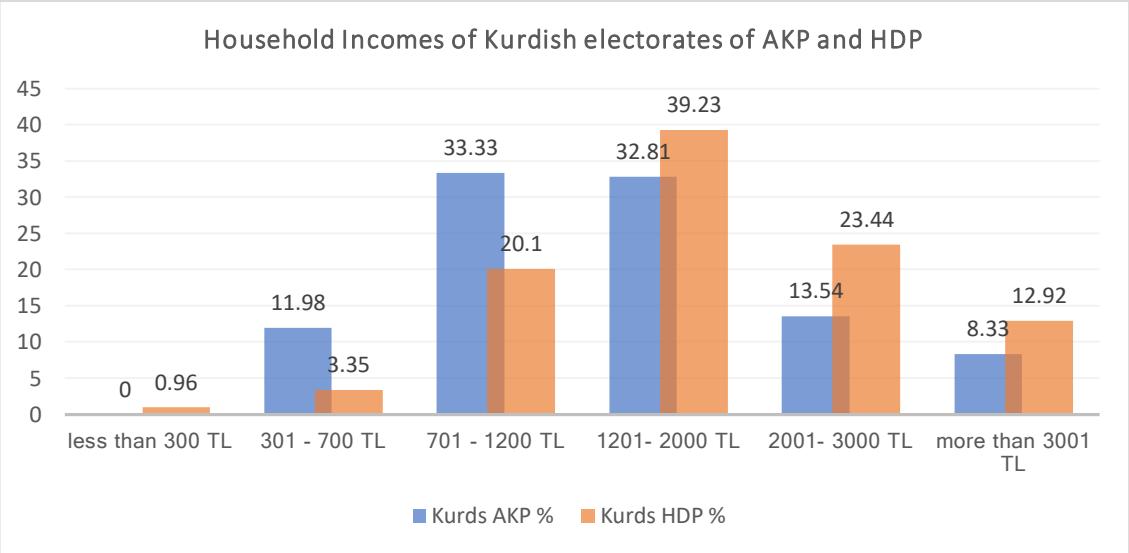

Fig. 28 Household incomes of pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in the Bağcılar sample

[112] The number of observations is 150 for the pro-AKP Kurds and 196 for the pro-HDP Kurds. The range of income is between 150 TL and 10.000 TL. I omit the outlier figures that seriously damages the normal distribution in this calculation – i.e. one observation is 0 TL, one observation 30.000 TL and two observations are 40.000 TL. These figures are really exceptional and do not represent the general patterns in the Kurdish population in the district.

According to the KONDA's own composite class measure, most Kurdish respondents in Bağcılar are from lower-classes. Out of 283 Kurdish respondents in the sample, the low-income group is 26 percent, the lower-middle-income group is 49 percent, the higher-middle income group is 15 percent, and the high-income group is 10 percent in Bağcılar. This figure confirms the fact that most of the Kurdish population in the district are poor. In terms of political preferences, the pro-HDP Kurds have higher percentages of middle-classes (i.e. lower-middle-income and higher-middle-income groups) than the pro-AKP Kurds. While the extent of middle-classes is more than 70 percent for the pro-HDP Kurds, it is 60 percent for the pro-AKP Kurds.

In the context of this dissertation, one of the most critical parameters is the financial capability. The Figure 29 summarizes the responses on this question in the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar. Out of 417 Kurdish respondents, only 16 percent living in the district are financially capable, the remaining majority (84 percent) are thereby financially incapable (barely or cannot sustain themselves).

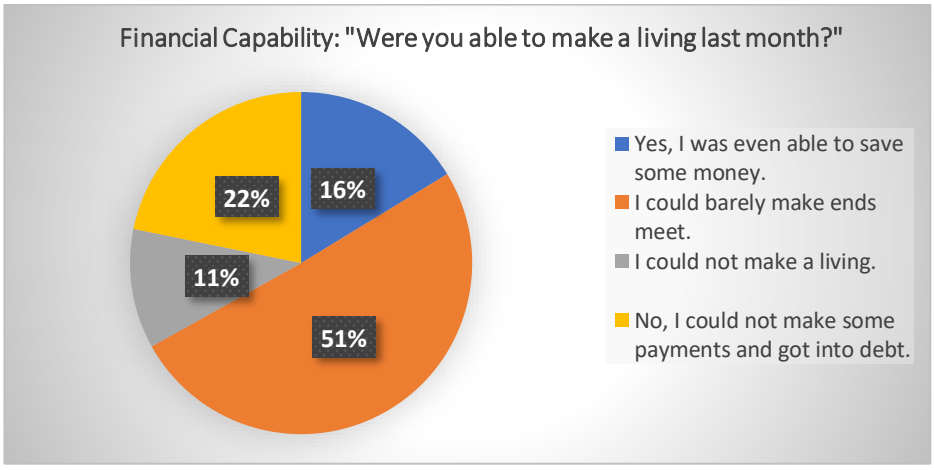

Fig. 29 Financial capability in the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar

In comparing the financial capability responses of the pro-AKP and the pro-HDP Kurds, it is observed that the pro-HDP Kurds more often declare themselves worse-off than the pro-AKP Kurds, despite their higher income levels. It is necessary to

remember that pro-HDP Kurds on average higher household income and educational attainment than the pro-AKP Kurds in Bağcılar. Figure 30 demonstrates the responses of the pro-AKP Kurds and the pro-HDP Kurds to the financial capability. There are especially two divergent patterns – in the first category (saving money) and the fourth category (getting into debt). Despite their lower income, the pro-AKP Kurds seem more satisfied with their financial conditions than the pro-HDP Kurds. In other words, although the pro-AKP Kurds have lower incomes and lower average education levels on average, they are not complaining as much as the pro-HDP Kurds. The divergent patterns of financial capability between these two electoral groups might be explained through heightened perception of deprivation or "the relative deprivation" of the pro-HDP Kurds. It is necessary to remark that the figures of financial capability and relative deprivation should be evaluated along with the income, education and occupational status parameter. Although the pro-HDP Kurds have better prospects of upward mobility (in terms of income and education) compared to the pro-AKP Kurds, they feel and experience relative deprivation deeper than the latter group. It is the relative deprivation perception that channel this group to the HDP. I will discuss this mechanism in the following chapters.

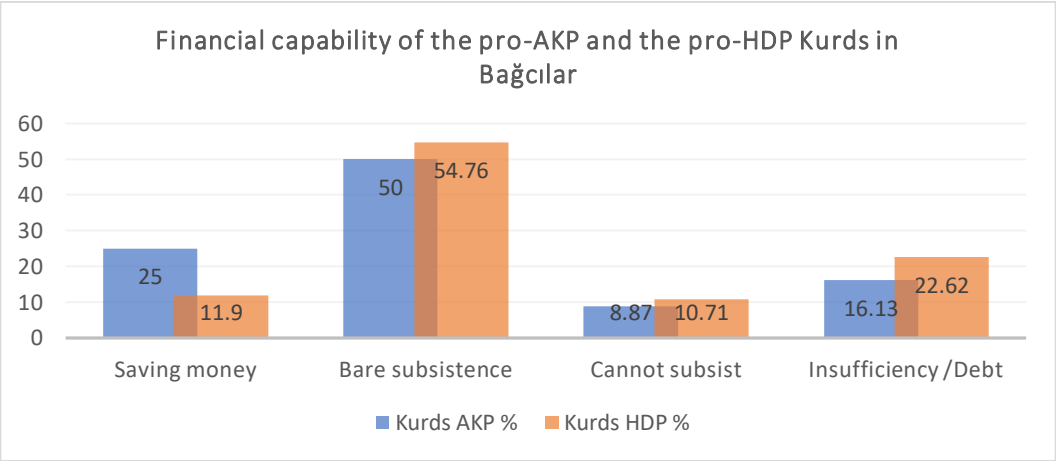

Fig. 30 Financial capability of the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds in the Bağcılar sample

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed the descriptive statistics on the Kurdish samples of Istanbul and Bağcılar drawn from the KONDA dataset and mapped out the demographic and social-political-economic dynamics behind the Kurdish political preferences for AKP and HDP. In terms of the Kurdish population density, Bağcılar is the first-ranking district in Istanbul according to the KONDA survey results, which explains why Bağcılar was selected as a case-study in this dissertation. In addition, within the boundaries of Bağcılar, Demirkapı neighborhood has the highest Kurdish population density. The birthplace results show that the Bitlis Kurds are the largest Kurdish group in the district. This pattern is in line with ethnographic findings, most of my Kurdish informants in the field are indeed from Bitlis. Moreover, the high percentage of Istanbulite Kurds (those born in Istanbul, 12 percent) in the samples reveals the long-lasting impact of the Kurdish migration to the city.

The demographic patterns imply the fact that the Kurdish issue is not a "peripheral" or "regional" problem anymore, as it was used to be perceived in the 1990s; it has turned into a critical new urban issue with multiple dimensions. Insofar as Istanbul became a permanent home for about 2,3 million Kurdish migrants and turned out to be the largest Kurdish metropolis in Turkey, the Kurdish issue must be discussed regarding its multifaceted political-economic dimensions – including voting and class positions/relations.

The descriptive statistics shows that most of the Kurdish voters live above the hunger threshold but below the poverty threshold in Istanbul. The Kurdish sector in the city are economically more disadvantaged than the Turkish sector. This is in line with the major findings in the existing literature, in which it is discussed that the Kurds became the target of the new urban poverty in the 1990s vis-à-vis the

changing class structure in the metropolis. Nonetheless, as this chapter shows, the class positions and socioeconomic status of Kurds living in Istanbul and Bağcılar are not homogenous at all. On average, pro-HDP Kurds have higher (household) income and education levels than the pro-AKP Kurds. However, despite this fact, it is the same (former) group that stated being relatively more financially incapable. In addition, descriptive statistics confirms that pro-AKP Kurds are more religious on average than the pro-HDP Kurds. Moreover, the pro-HDP Kurds consist of more male and younger generations, the pro-AKP Kurds consist of more female and older generations.

CHAPTER 4

KURDISH VOTING BEHAVIOR IN ISTANBUL AND BAĞCILAR

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyze the class-based dynamics behind the Kurdish political preferences in the urban setting through statistical modeling. To be more specific, by conducting regression estimation on the Kurdish votes on the Istanbul and Bağcılar samples, I will try to figure out how and to what extent class-based parameters determine their voting for the AKP and the HDP in the urban context. For this reason, I specify the dependent variable of the statistical analysis as the Kurdish voting for the AKP or the HDP. Since the outcome is a binary response (i.e. a dichotomous dependent variable), I apply the logistic regression analysis.[113] I generate a dummy dependent variable, *hdpkurd*: if Kurdish voting for the HDP, *hdpkurd*=1; if Kurdish voting for the AKP, *hdpkurd*=0. As class proxies, I mainly use income, education, and financial capability.[114] In other words, the independent variables are household income, educational attainment, and financial capability.[115]

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[113] I use the STATA 14 software and "logit" command regarding the dichotomous dependent variable.
[114] According to Wright (2015), there are three essential methods to measure class, which have been derived from the three diffferent epistemological traditions. These are the stratification approach, the (neo-)Weberian approach and the Marxist approach. The stratification approach looks at the individual attibutes of income and education. The Weberian approach is based on the professions and types of employment. The Marxist approach looks at exploitation and domination relationships. In the previous chapter, I use both stratification and Weberian approaches. In this chapter, I use the income and education stratification. In the following ethnography chapters, I will also apply to the Weberian and Marxist class perspectives in order to understand the status of Kurds living in Istanbul.
[115] I also use the variables of employment status, residence type and auto-ownership in regression analysis, but they are not directly included in the models. In necessary cases, their results will be shown in the footnotes. In addition, one may wonder why I use household size as a control variable. The economic and financial status of a household in the city depends on its total income, which is a function of total number of working members in a household. Thereby, the household size variable is inserted into analysis. Moreover, I do not directly use the composite economic class measure that was created by KONDA in the post-survey process. Because we do not know its calculation; the upper and lower limits of these ready-made class categories are ambiguous. Nonetheless, I conducted the regression analysis between the *hdpkurd* and the economic class variable. The economic class turned out to be statistically insignificant. The main reason for this case I believe the loose categorization of upper-class. Along with the religiosity variable, the lifestyle variable could also be used. But as one may expect, there is a high correlation between religiosity and lifestyle parameters (the latter also

The control variables are age, gender, household size and religiosity. In this chapter, I analyze four models at the urban and local levels.

<u>Istanbul Models:</u>

M1: $\text{hdpkurd} = \alpha + \beta_1 \times \text{incomewo} + \beta_i \times \text{controls (age, gender)} + \varepsilon$
M2: $\text{hdpkurd} = \alpha + \beta_1 \times \text{education} + \beta_i \times \text{controls (age, gender)} + \varepsilon$
M3: $\text{hdpkurd} = \alpha + \beta_1 \times \text{incomewo} + \beta_i \times \text{controls (age, gender, housepop, relig)} + \varepsilon$
M4: $\text{hdpkurd} = \alpha + \beta_1 \times \text{incomewo} + \beta_2 \times \text{subsist} + \beta_i \times$
$\text{controls (age, gender, housepop, relig, timedummy [kobanieffect])} + \varepsilon$

<u>Bağcılar models:</u>

M1: $\text{hdpkurd} = \alpha + \beta_1 \times \text{incomewo} + \beta_i \times \text{controls (age, gender)} + \varepsilon$
M2: $\text{hdpkurd} = \alpha + \beta_1 \times \text{incomewo} + \beta_i \times \text{controls (age, gender, housepop)} + \varepsilon$
M3: $\text{hdpkurd} = \alpha + \beta_1 \times \text{incomewo} + \beta_i \times \text{controls (age, gender, housepop, relig)} + \varepsilon$
M4: $\text{hdpkurd} = \alpha + \beta_1 \times \text{incomewo} + \beta_2 \times \text{subsist} + \beta_i \times$
$\text{controls (age, gender, housepop, relig)} + \varepsilon$

In these models, *incomewo* is the household income; *education* is the educational attainment; *housepop* is household population size; *subsist* (acronym for subsistence) is the financial capability; *relig* is religiosity; *timedummy* is a control variable for temporal (annual) changes on the Kurdish voting between 2010 and 2015; *kobanieffect* is a specific time-dummy variable for controlling the influence of the Kobani incidents (started in October 2014) on the Kurdish voting.

For the household income, which depends on the open-ended income question in the KONDA survey, I eliminated the outlier figures of household income that are below 100 TL and above 10.000 TL.[116] Because such figures are exceptional and violates the linearity assumption. As it is seen in the table, all other independent

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involves "religious conservative" category), thus one must prefer one of them in the statistical modelling. I prefer to use the religiosity parameter because the previous statistical studies predominantly used and discussed religiosity. While the education variable becomes significant in almost all regression estimation trials on the Kurdish samples of Istanbul, it becomes not significant in almost all regression estimation trials on Bağcılar. Therefore, I revised the models for Bağcılar. I will discuss this condition in more detail in the following section.

[116] The outlier figures that are eliminated (below 100 TL and above 10.000 TL) reduce the sample size in a well-balanced way. In the Istanbul Kurdish sample, 72 observations that are below 100 TL are eliminated. Of these observations, 33 observations are the pro-AKP Kurds and 39 are the pro-HDP Kurds. In addition, 10 observations that are above 10.000 are eliminated in the Kurdish sample of Istanbul. Of these observations, 4 are the pro-AKP Kurds and 6 are the pro-HDP Kurds. After the elimination of the outlier figures the Istanbul sample size reduces from 4170 to 4088 observations. The omitted figures are too marginal considering the distribution of the sample. The omission of outlier figures helps us to better understand the general trends within the Kurdish population in Istanbul.

(explanatory as well as control) variables are categorical; most of them are converted from continuous to categorical by KONDA itself. For each category, I constructed a dummy variable. For gender, the first category is female, and the second category is male. For age, the first category is "youth" (or "young adults") between 18-30 years old; the second age category is "adults," who are more than 30 years old.[117] The education attainment has seven ordered categories, which are ranked from lowest to highest. In order to better capture the effect of education, I also used the natural logarithm of the education variable.[118] The household size parameter has 4 ordered categories from lowest to highest. The religiosity parameter has 4 ordered categories from least to most religioıs: 1) nonbeliever ("*inançsız*"), 2) believer ("*inançlı*"), 3) pious ("*dindar*"), 4) devotee ("*sofu*"). With regard to the financial capability, which asks "were your able to make a living last month?", there are 4 responses that are ordered from highest to lowest level.

Table 15. Types and Characteristics of the Variables

The variables	Feautures
Household income	Continuous – between 100 TL and 10.000 TL
Gender	Binary categorical: 1) female, 2) male
Age	Binary categorical: 1) 18-30 years old, 2) more than 30 years old
Education	Ordered categorical: 1) illiterate, 2) primary school, 3) middle-school, 4) high school, 5) university, 6) master's and doctoral degree
Household size	Ordered categorical: 1) 1-2 persons, 2) 3-5 persons, 3) 6-8 persons, 4) 9 persons+
Religiosity	Ordered categorical: 1) nonbeliever, 2) believer, 3) pious, 4) devotee
Financial capability/ "subsist"	Ordered categorical: 1) "Yes, I even saved some money, 2) "I could barely make ends meet," 3) "I could not make a living", 4) "No, I could not make some payments and got into debt."
Time-dummy	Ordered categorical: 1) 2010, 2) 2011, 3) 2012, 4) 2013, 5) 2014, 6) 2015
Kobani-effect-dummy	Binary categorical: 0) before October 2014, 1) after October 2014

[117] This age categorization is in line with the standards of the UN (2004): those aged between 0-14 years are children, between 15-24 years are youth, between 25- 59 are adults, and above 60 are elderly.

[118]The impact of educational attainment on one's welfare is generally expected to increase exponentially. One-year education has a small effect in the high school level, but beyond the undergraduate level its impact substantially increases.

In order to control the temporal changes on the Kurdish votes, I constructed time dummy variables, in which I coded survey results of each year between 2010 and 2015 from 1 to 5. Lastly, in order to control the potential influence of the Kobani incidents on Kurdish votes, I constructed the Kobani-effect dummy, in which the survey responses after October 2014 are coded as 1 and the responses before this date are coded as 0.[119]

It is necessary to recognize that there are special commands for estimating the effects of categorical factor variables in STATA. In the logistic regression analysis, I use prefix i. (i.*variable*) to specify the categorical parameters. In running logistic regression, I use a "robust" command in order to derive the most robust and least biased estimations.[120] In addition, I use the "cluster" command in order to control the neighborhood effect; there are more than 400 neighborhoods in the KONDA dataset. In the following sections, first, I will run the regression models on the Kurdish sample of Istanbul, and then apply similar models to the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar.

4.2 Logistic regression on the Kurdish sample of Istanbul

The Kurdish sample of Istanbul consists of 3464 observations. With the selection of particular variables, the number of observations naturally vary in the models. For the 4 different models at hand, the samples are large enough to be representative. The results of logistic regression estimations are illustrated in the Table 16.

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[119] Kobani incidents in October 2014 are the most significant conjectural event in terms of contemporary Kurdish history. After the ISIS's severe attack in Kobani and the armed conflict between ISIS and YPG, Turkey's Kurds demanded a supportive move from the Turkish government towards Kurds living in Kobani, but the government refused this demand. This triggered widespread demonstrations in the streets of both the southeastern and western metropolises.

[120] The exact STATA commands for the 4 models that I used are as follows:

logit hdpkurd incomewo i.age i.gender, robust cluster(mahalle)
logit hdpkurd lnedu i.age i.gender, robust cluster(mahalle)
logit hdpkurd incomewo i.age i.gender i.housepop i.relig, robust cluster(mahalle)
logit hdpkurd incomewo i.age i.gender i.housepop i.relig i.subsist, robust cluster(mahalle)

For clustering analysis in the STATA software see (Cameron 2011, STATA 2013)

Table 16. Results of the Logistic Regression Estimation on the Istanbul Sample

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
DV: hdpkurd				
Incomewo	0.000125***		0.0000728*	0.000129**
	(0.0000345)		(0.0000363)	(0.0000456)
1.agegroup	0	0	0	0
(Youth)	(.)	(.)	(.)	(.)
2.agegroup	-0.349***	-0.265**	-0.229*	-0.371**
(Adult)	(0.0847)	(0.0885)	(0.0984)	(0.128)
1.gender	0	0	0	0
(Female)	(.)	(.)	(.)	(.)
2.gender	0.548***	0.534***	0.456***	0.555***
(Male)	(0.0840)	(0.0840)	(0.0983)	(0.119)
Education		0.350***		
		(0.100)		
1.housepop			0	0
(1-2 persons)			(.)	(.)
2.housepop			0.159	0.181
(3-5 persons)			(0.178)	(0.224)
3.housepop			0.455*	0.446
(6-8 persons)			(0.189)	(0.238)
4.housepop			0.926***	0.983***
(9 persons +)			(0.238)	(0.277)
1.relig			0	0
(Nonbeliever)			(.)	(.)
2.relig			-2.498***	-2.448***
(Believer)			(0.602)	(0.595)
3.relig			-3.662***	-3.596***
(Pious)			(0.598)	(0.595)
4.relig			-4.152***	-4.118***
(Devotee)			(0.607)	(0.605)
1.subsist				0
(Decent)				(.)
2.subsist				1.283***
(Hardly)				(0.189)
3.subsist				1.406***
(Cannot)				(0.224)
4.subsist				1.761***
(Debted)				(0.208)
Kobanieffect				0.495**
				(0.151)
_cons	-0.258*	-0.459**	2.928***	1.285*
	(0.115)	(0.158)	(0.606)	(0.652)
N	2694	2898	2000	1642

Standard errors in parentheses, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The regression results show that household income is statistically significant in all models. After controlling for age and gender, the household income parameter turns out to be significant at the 0.001 level in the first model. There is a positive relationship between household income and the HDP voting; an increase in income increases the likelihood of voting for the HDP among Kurdish voters. Kurdish households with higher income are more likely to support the HDP, whereas Kurdish households with lower income are more likely to support the AKP. This result confirms my initial hypothesis that asserts the poorer Kurdish groups support the AKP, whereas upwardly-mobile Kurdish groups support the HDP. In the first model, both age and gender are statistically significant (at the level of 0,001): Kurdish men are more likely to vote for the HDP than the Kurdish women, and Kurdish "youth" (18-30 years old) are more likely to support the HDP than the Kurdish "adults" (more than 30 years old). In other words, younger Kurdish men are more inclined towards the HDP, and adult Kurdish women (middle-aged and elderly) are more inclined towards the AKP in the metropolis. As a matter of fact, I have shown in the previous chapter that the conservative Kurdish housewives are the most significant electoral constituent of the AKP.

In the second model, instead of income, I use educational attainment for measuring class. Education can be regarded as one of the main indicators of socio-economic status in terms of the mainstream stratification approach. As it is shown in the table, education becomes significant at the level of 0.001. As the education levels increase, Kurds are more likely to vote for HDP and less likely to vote for the AKP in Istanbul. In other words, the pro-HDP Kurds tend to have higher education levels than the pro-AKP Kurds. Higher education levels of the pro-HDP Kurds increase their chances for upward class mobility. Similar to the first model, age and gender

(control variables) are statistically significant – respectively at the level of 0.01 and 0.001, which means that younger Kurdish voters are more likely to vote for the HDP than older Kurdish voters, and Kurdish men are more likely to vote for the HDP than Kurdish women. Based on the results of the first two models, it is possible to argue that the pro-HDP Kurds are positioned at the higher ranks of class hierarchies than pro-AKP Kurds in the city.[121] By looking at income and education estimates, one can posit that the AKP is more successful in attracting the poorer and undereducated Kurds, whereas the HDP is more successful in attracting the more educated Kurds in Istanbul.

In the third model, after the inclusion of age, gender, household size and religiosity as control variables, the household income continues to be statistically. As the income levels increase, Kurds are more likely to vote for the HDP and less likely vote for the AKP. Kurds with higher income tend to vote for the HDP in Istanbul. In this model, religiosity turns out to be statistically significant at the level of 0.001 and there is a negative relationship between religiosity and the HDP voting.[122] As the religiosity levels increase, Kurds are less likely to support the HDP and more likely support the AKP. Moreover, the household size is statistically significant in this model. In considering the singles and small families (the category of 1-2 persons) as a reference category, the extended Kurdish households (with more than 6 persons)

[121] The logistic regression estimation on the employment status parameter shows that the "employed" Kurds are more likely to support the HDP than the "unemployed" Kurds, who seem to be more inclined towards the AKP in Istanbul. The unemployed Kurds (including housewives and ones who seeks job) form a significant segment of the AKP electorate. The estimation on the residence type variable, which has 5 ordered categories from *gecekondu* to villa, shows that the Kurds living in closed-communities ("*site*") are more likely to support the HDP than the AKP in reference to the first category. Nonetheless, there is no statistically significant variation between the two groups in terms of the auto-ownership parameter. All in all, these patterns confirm that the poor Kurds tend to support the AKP, Kurdish middle-class tend to support the HDP in the metropolis.

[122] Similar pattern can be observed through the lifestyle parameter. The estimations on lifestyle show that "traditional conservative" and "religious conservative" Kurds are less likely to vote for the HDP and more likely to vote for the AKP in considering the "modern" Kurds as reference category. It is observed that the more Kurds become religious, they move away the HDP in Istanbul.

are more likely to vote for the HDP and less likely to vote for the AKP. Similar to the previous models, age and gender (control variables) are statistically significant.

The estimates of household size and religiosity could allow us to test rival hypotheses on the subject. As one may expect, the number of working members (wage-earners) could be higher in larger families and this condition could bring higher levels of household income. Departing from this point, one could posit that the household size parameter, instead of the household income, better explains the variation in Kurdish voting. However, the fact that the income parameter remains statistically significant even after controlling for the household size indicates that income has explanatory power on its own.

It is possible to put forward a similar claim on religiosity: By only looking at the estimate of religiosity in the third model, one could attribute the variation on Kurdish voting to the different religiosity patterns among the electorate. In fact, a previous statistical study strongly claims that the most salient cleavage on the Kurdish voting is religiosity (Ekmekçi, 2011). This study asserts that, as the religiosity levels increase, Kurds are more likely to vote for the pro-Islamist parties and less likely to vote for the pro-Kurdish parties. However, my results indicate that even after controlling for the influence of religiosity, the income parameter continues to be statistically significant. Income has a strong explanatory power. In order to elaborate this condition, let us assume a hypothetical case: Considering two Kurdish families living in Istanbul with the same household size and the same religiosity level, the results in the third model show that the one with higher income would be more likely to vote for the HDP.

The estimates of the Model 4 present the most compelling results in terms of my dissertation's main puzzle. In this model, the explanatory variables are household

income and financial capability ("*subsist*"), and the control variables are household size, religiosity, age, gender and the *kobanieffect*. In my original model, instead of the *kobanieffect* variable, I take the time-dummy variable to control the temporal changes on Kurdish voting; its results are shown in Appendix H. I noticed that the only critical change occurred in 2015, after the Kobani incidents. Therefore, I prefer to construct a separate control variable for measuring the influence of Kobani incidents in the regression analysis, which is shown in Model 4. The results of Model 4 and the original model shown in Appendix H are similar.

As it is seen in the Model 4, the household income variable is statistically significant (at the level of 0.01), and there is a positive relationship between income and the HDP voting. All other independent variables in the model are statistically significant. There is a positive relationship between the household size and the HDP voting. In considering the Kurdish singles and small families (1-2 persons) as a reference category, the most extended Kurdish households (with 9 persons and more) are more likely to support the HDP. There is a negative relationship between religiosity and the HDP voting. The results of age and gender estimates are same as those in the previous models. Finally, the fact that the "*kobanieffect*" variable becomes significant at the level of 0.01 shows that there is a positive relationship between "kobanieffect" variable and the HDP voting. The Kobani incidents turns out to be critical juncture for Kurdish voters. After the Kobani incidents (and subsequent demonstrations in metropolises), Kurds are more likely to support the HDP.

What deserves special attention in the Model 4 is that, after including all independent explanatory and control variables (household income, household size, religiosity, age, gender), the financial capability ("*subsist"*) parameter turns out to be significant at the level of 0.001. There is a strong negative relationship between

financial capability and the HDP voting. In general, Kurdish households who declare that they are financially incapable are more likely to vote for the HDP and that they are financially capable are more likely to vote for the AKP.

This finding, at first sight, seems to be in contradiction with the income pattern, because it is the pro-HDP Kurds who have higher income. Despite this fact, the pro-HDP Kurds more often declare that they are financially worse-off. In order to make this finding more understandable, we can consider a hypothetical situation: Assume that there are two Kurdish households with the same household income, same household size and same religiosity levels. Of these two families, one who declares to be financially incapable is more likely to support the HDP, and the other who declares to be financially capable is more likely to support the AKP. I confirmed this finding through the clustering analysis of different combinations of parameters, in which the responses of the Kurdish households to the *subsist* question with the various income levels, household sizes and religiosity levels are tested. Controlling for the different combinations of variables, the subsist parameter become statistically significant in all estimations. This finding on the financial capability is very crucial, because, apparently, the pro-HDP Kurds live below their desired welfare levels compared to the pro-AKP Kurds, as the latter group seems to be relatively more satisfied with their financial conditions. Considering the fact that the financial capability measures self-declared welfare levels as well as the perception of deprivation, this phenomenon can be referred to as the relative deprivation of the pro-HDP Kurds.

Nonetheless, at this juncture, one may raise a concern about the endogeneity of financial capability indicator, because it is closely related to one's political preference – being a proponent or opponent. Political views are expected to be

correlated with the levels of contentment. Veenhoven (2014) argues that "[c]ontentment is the degree to which one perceives one's wants are being met. It involves a cognitive judgment in which perceptions of life-as-it-is are compared with notions of how-life-should-be" (p. 1). Therefore, the question at stake is whether the feeling of discontent leads to contentious politics or the contentious politics leads to the feeling of discontent. Following the relative deprivation theory, one might argue that it is feeling of discontent that leads the contentious politics. Those who are dissatisfied with their current material conditions and perceive that their aspirations have not been met might declare that they are financially incapable and support the contentious political movements. This discontent, which needs to be evaluated in relative terms, can be attributed to other non-material reasons, such as exclusion, discrimination or past grievances. Nonetheless, one may be still suspicious about whether discontent leads to the support for the contentious movement (i.e. the HDP voting) or whether the dissident political identity in the form of contentious politics creates such discontent/dissatisfaction. Correlation between the two factors is obvious, but the direction of causality needs to be checked. Therefore, it is necessary to test for a potential endogeneity problem.

In the econometrics literature, there is no specific endogeneity test for the logistic regression analysis. The best known general method for testing endogeneity in regression analysis is the Hausman specification test.[123] Although my estimation technique are not fit for the Hausman test, I nonetheless apply the test to a model in

[123] This test is often applied to panel data models and multinomial logit models. Hausman's specification test "compares an estimator θ1 that is known to be consistent with an estimator θ2 that is efficient under the assumption being tested. The null hypothesis is that the estimator θ2 is indeed an efficient (and consistent) estimator of the true parameters. If this is the case, there should be no systematic difference between the two estimators. If there exists a systematic difference in the estimates, you have reason to doubt the assumptions on which the efficient estimator is based" (Stata Manual, 2013)

which I take the HDP voting as a dependent variable, and household income, religiosity and financial capability as independent variables. The formal Hausman specification test shows that the financial capability is not endogenous (i.e. no systematic difference was found between estimators, see Appendix G).

Recently, some econometricians argue that a more suitable method for testing endogeneity in the statistical models with binary outcomes is the instrumental variable (IV) estimation. The Wald test statistic indicates whether the instrumented variable (i.e. *subsist*) is exogenous or endogenous. The critical point here is finding a valid instrument, which "induces changes in the explanatory variable but has no independent effect on the dependent variable, allowing a researcher to uncover the causal effect of the explanatory variable on the dependent variable" (Ménard and Shirley, 2018, p. 92). Therefore, the instrumental variable should influence the financial capability indicator (i.e. *subsist*) at a statistically significant level but should not have an influence on the HDP voting (i.e. the dependent variable). Considering the KONDA dataset, the most appropriate parameter that serves this purpose is the auto-ownership. As it is shown in the table below, on the one hand, the logistic regression analysis between the *hdpkurd* (dependent) and the auto-ownership (independent) variables indicates that the auto-ownership does not influence the HDP voting at a statistically significant level. On the other hand, the ordered logit regression between the *subsist* (dependent) and the auto-ownership (independent) variables indicates that the auto-ownership induces a significant (explanatory) effect on the financial capability. The auto-ownership is significant at the level of 0.001 and positively influence the financial capability. Table 17 summarizes these results. Therefore, we can use the auto-ownership as a valid instrument for testing endogeneity.

Table 17. Ologit Estimation on the Financial Capability

	Logit regression "hdpkurd"	Ologit regression "subsist"
Main		
auto-ownership	0.0602	0.744***
	(0.0960)	(0.0853)
_cons	0.0424	
	(0.171)	
cut1		
_cons		-0.395**
		(0.151)
cut2		
_cons		1.949***
		(0.158)
cut3		
_cons		2.648***
		(0.161)
N	2157	2624

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The Table 18 shows the estimates of *ivprobit* model, in which the financial capability (*subsist*) is the instrumented variable. As a result of the IV estimation, the Wald test statistic turns out to be not significant (for details, see Appendix D). It is necessary to recognize that the Wald test statistic proves the exogeneity of the instrumented variable because the null hypothesis is no endogeneity (i.e H_0 = exogeneity). It is seen in the table that we cannot reject the null hypothesis. In other words, *subsist* becomes exogenous and thus can safely be used.[124] Therefore, we can both rely on the estimates of IV model shown in Table 18 as well as the Model 4. Recently, citing several drawbacks of the IV estimations, Baum et al. (2012) offers a new approach called a "special regressor method" to overcome the endogeneity problem.

[124] The STATA manual (2013) reminds that "if the [Wald] test statistic is not significant, there is not sufficient information in the sample to reject the null, so a regular probit regression may be appropriate. The point estimates from *ivprobit* are still consistent, though those from *probit* are likely to have smaller standard errors."

Table 18. IV Estimation

	ivprobit Model
DV: hdpkurd	
subsist	0.522*
	(2.17)
incomewo	0.000103**
	(3.18)
relig	-0.547***
	(-7.31)
_cons	0.222
	(0.28)
subsist	
incomewo	-0.0000848***
	(-4.98)
relig	-0.0742*
	(-2.30)
auto	0.270***
	(4.94)
_cons	2.297***
	(15.40)
athrho	
_cons	-0.261
	(-0.98)
lnsigma	
_cons	-0.0462**
	(-2.65)
N	1640

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

For the special regressor method, we need to find a particular additional regressor that needs to be exogenous and continuously distributed. Any regressor with these properties would satisfy the necessary conditions of the special regressor method. I prefer to use the age variable that depends on the open-ended age question in the KONDA dataset because it satisfies the necessary conditions: it is exogenous and continuous. The results of the special regressor method are shown in Appendix F. The special regressor estimation also confirms that financial capability is not endogenous and becomes statistically significant.

In conclusion, it is possible to argue that the financial capability is a reliable indicator to explain the variation on the Kurdish voting for the AKP and the HDP. After considering the control variables and application of various tests, the financial capability becomes one of the main determinants of the HDP voting. This conclusion supports our initial hypothesis, which states that the relative deprivation leads to the support for contentious political movement, i.e. the HDP voting. It is possible to conclude that, despite higher income and education levels, Kurds who declare that they are financially incapable tend to support the HDP.

4.3 Logistic regression results on the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar

In this section, in order to explore the class-based dynamics behind the Kurdish voting for the AKP and the HDP in Bağcılar, the logistic regression analysis will be applied on the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar. Before the statistical analysis, I started my fieldwork in Bağcılar. After the statistical analysis, keeping the regression estimates in mind, I revisited the field and continued to conduct interviews and participant observations. In this way, I had an opportunity to observe whether the statistical results hold or not in the field.

Similar to the estimations on Istanbul, the dependent variable (*hdpkurd*) is a binary response on voting (*hdpkurd*=0 if the individual voted for the AKP, *hdpkurd*=1 for HDP), and the independent variables are household income, financial capability, age, gender, religiosity and household size.[125] The main class variable used in the section is income. I omitted the estimations of education, because in most

[125] The specific STATA commands for the models that I use are as follows:
.logit hdpkurd incomewo i.age i.gender, robust cluster(mahalle)
.logit hdpkurd incomewo i.age i.gender i.housepop, robust cluster(mahalle)
.logit hdpkurd incomewo i.age i.gender i.housepop i.relig, robust cluster(mahalle)
.logit hdpkurd incomewo i.age i.gender i.housepop i.relig i.subsist, robust cluster(mahalle)

trials it becomes statistically not significant. Only in a few trials, education becomes statistically significant; it turns out that the Kurdish voters having university and graduate degrees (M.A. and Ph.D.) are more likely to vote for the HDP (the reference category is "illiterate"). Therefore, the influence of education is limited in explaining the Kurdish voting in the district level. There is a total of 613 observations in the Kurdish sample of Bağcılar. The total sample size decreases to 430 observations on the voting question, in which 211 Kurdish respondents vote for AKP (*hdpkurd*=0) and 219 Kurdish respondents vote for HDP (*hdpkurd*=1). The number of observations further decreases with the selection of particular variables. The summary statistics are presented in the Appendix B. The results of the Bağcılar regression estimations are presented in the Table 19.

In the first model, household income, age and gender are used as independent variables. The household income is statistically significant and has a positive impact on the HDP voting. As the income levels increase, Kurds are more likely to vote for the HDP in Bağcılar. In line with the Istanbul estimates, the pro-HDP Kurds have higher income levels than the pro-AKP Kurds in the district. In this model, while age is not statistically significant, gender is significant, which means that Kurdish men are more likely to vote for the HDP than Kurdish women.

In the second model, the household income is statistically significant, which means that Kurds with higher income levels are more likely vote for the HDP. The household size is statistically significant: in comparison to the reference category of 1-2 persons, the larger Kurdish households (with 9 persons and more) are more likely to vote for the HDP. Among other controls, age is not significant, whereas gender is significant.

Table 19 Results of the Logistic Regression Estimation on the Bağcılar Sample

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
DV: hdpkurd				
incomewo	0.000319**	0.000322*	0.000293	0.000293
	(0.000104)	(0.000161)	(0.000160)	(0.000177)
1.agegroup	0	0	0	0
(Youth)	(.)	(.)	(.)	(.)
2.agegroup	-0.374	-0.392	-0.193	-0.555
(Adult)	(0.231)	(0.286)	(0.276)	(0.392)
1.gender	0	0	0	0
(Female)	(.)	(.)	(.)	(.)
2.gender	0.529**	0.590*	0.474	0.426
(Male)	(0.194)	(0.283)	(0.297)	(0.379)
1.housepop		0	0	0
(1-2 persons)		(.)	(.)	(.)
2.housepop		1.165	0.916	0.222
(3-5 persons)		(0.701)	(0.699)	(1.274)
3.housepop		1.024	0.851	0.559
(6-8 persons)		(0.866)	(0.842)	(1.298)
4.housepop		2.109**	1.959**	2.073
(9 persons +)		(0.745)	(0.730)	(1.383)
1.relig			0	0
(Nonbeliever)			(.)	(.)
2.relig			0	0
(Believer)			(.)	(.)
3.relig			-0.815	-1.083
(Pious)			(0.466)	(0.746)
4.relig			-1.243*	-1.987*
(Devotee)			(0.532)	(0.841)
1.subsist				0
(Decent)				(.)
2.subsist				1.475**
(Hardly)				(0.533)
3.subsist				1.599*
(Cannot)				(0.747)
4.subsist				2.019**
(Debted)				(0.640)
_cons	-0.418	-1.679**	-0.682	-0.961
	(0.334)	(0.603)	(0.763)	(1.467)
N	337	240	232	172

Standard errors in parentheses, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

In the third model, after the inclusion of religiosity, household income is no longer significant. The religiosity parameter diminishes the power of the income parameter. Religiosity is significant[126] and there is a negative relationship between religiosity and the HDP voting: An increase in the religiosity level decreases the likelihood of the HDP voting and increases the likelihood of the AKP voting in Bağcılar.[127] Moreover, the household size indicator is still significant, which means that the larger Kurdish households (with 9 persons and more) are more likely to vote for the HDP in the district. In this model, both age and gender are not significant.

Model 3 is shows that the household income loses its significance in explaining the Kurdish voting behavior after the inclusion of household size and religiosity variables. It seems that both the religiosity and household parameters are more significant than the income parameter in the case of Bağcıar. However, after I dismissed the clustering command in the analysis and ran the same regression model, I observed that income, which was previously insignificant, turns out to be significant. The clustering command is necessary on the Istanbul estimations, because there are 782 neighborhoods, but it is not particularly important for Bağcılar because there are only 22 neighborhoods. The elimination of the clustering is negligible in the case of Bağcılar because the number of clusters (neighborhoods) is far less. Table 20 shows the results of the same regression model (Model 3) without clustering command.

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[126] In the regression analysis, the first category of "nonbelievers" under the religiosity parameter for the pro-AKP Kurds is empty, which means nobody declares himself/herself as nonbeliever among the pro-AKP Kurds in the Bağcılar sample. Considering this, the 2nd category of the religiosity parameter ("believer") is used as a reference category. The STATA command is as follows:

logit hdpkurd incomewo i.age i.gender i.housepop ib2.relig, robust cluster(mahalle)

I have tried numerous other models and took other categories as reference; the results are consistent; religiosity is statistically significant and negatively influence the HDP voting.

[127] The life-style parameter also shows similar results; "religious conservative Kurds" are less likely to support the HDP ("modern Kurds" as reference category).

Table 20. Rerunning the Model without Clustering

	Model 5
DV: hdpkurd	
incomewo	0.000293*
	(0.000142)
1.housepop	0
	(.)
2.housepop	0.916
	(0.848)
3.housepop	0.851
	(0.857)
4.housepop	1.959*
	(0.952)
1.agegroup	0
	(.)
2.agegroup	-0.193
	(0.308)
1.gender	0
	(.)
2.gender	0.474
	(0.286)
1.relig	0
	(.)
2.relig	0
	(.)
3.relig	-0.815
	(0.565)
4.relig	-1.243
	(0.637)
_cons	-0.682
	(1.048)
N	232

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

In this revised estimation, the household income parameter once again becomes significant at the level of 0,05. An increase in income level increases the likelihood of the HDP voting and decreases the likelihood of the AKP voting among the Kurdish electorate in Bağcılar. The fact that the household income continues to

be significant even after controlling the household size and religiosity parameters show that income leads to a meaningful variation on the Kurdish voting in Bağcılar.

The last regression model (Model 4) is the most significant one in terms of the main puzzle of the dissertation. In this model, household income, financial capability, household size, age, gender and religiosity are used as independent variables. As it is seen, household income, household size, age, and gender parameters are not statistically significant, whereas the religiosity parameter becomes significant at the level 0.05. In line with the previous models, as the religiosity levels increase, Kurds are less likely to support the HDP and more likely to support the AKP in Bağcılar. The influence of religiosity, which presumably reduces the effect of other variables, is very strong on the Kurdish voting in Bağcılar. In addition to religiosity, financial capability is statistically significant in all categories at the level of 0.01. There is a negative relationship between financial capability and the HDP voting: Among the Kurdish households in the district, ones declaring that "they hardly made ends meet," "they could not make ends meet," and "they could not make some payments and got into debt" are more likely to support the HDP in reference to the first category, who declare that they are financially capable. As the self-declared welfare levels worsen, Kurds are more likely to support the HDP and less likely to support the AKP in Bağcılar.[128]

Comparatively speaking, despite the pro-HDP Kurds' higher income levels, they declare themselves to be more financially incapable than the pro-AKP Kurds. pro-HDP Kurds feel and perceive that they live below their expected welfare levels.

[128] The potential endogeneity problem, which was discussed for the Istanbul estimations, is also relevant for Bağcılar. One may wonder whether the financial capability parameter is endogenous or not. In order to test the potential endogeneity, I used the instrumental variable estimation in STATA, and found out that the financial capability is not endogenous – see Appendix D and E.

The pattern can be labeled as the relative deprivation, which plays a vital role in the support for contentious politics – the HDP voting.

4.4 Conclusion

In the concluding section, it may be helpful to overview the estimation results presented in this chapter. It is found out that class-based parameters have a critical influence on the Kurdish voting in the urban context. The logistic regression estimations show that household income and educational attainment parameters are statistically significant. There is a positive relationship between the household income and the HDP voting. To be more accurate, Kurds with higher income levels tend to support the HDP, and Kurds with lower income levels tend to support the AKP in Istanbul. Regarding this estimation, it is possible to maintain that the pro-HDP Kurds are often located higher in the class hierarchies than the pro-AKP Kurds.

In addition, there is a positive relationship between the education parameter and the HDP voting. As the educational attainment increases, Kurds are more likely to vote for the HDP and less likely vote for the AKP. It is a well-known fact that education is a significant proxy to social class and an increase in education levels increases one's prospect for upward class mobility (Wright, 2015). In line with the initial hypothesis, I found out that the upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments tend to support the HDP, the lower segments of the Kurdish electorate tend to support the AKP in Istanbul.

In addition to the statistical significance of income and education, the estimations show that age, gender, household size, religiosity and the Kobani-effect variables are statistically significant; they explain much of the variation between the HDP and the AKP voting among Kurdish electorate in Istanbul. Kurdish "youth"

(between 18 and 30 years old) are more likely to support the HDP; Kurdish "adults" (more than 30 years old) are more likely to support the AKP. The pro-HDP Kurds are relatively younger than the pro-AKP Kurds in Istanbul. In comparative terms, Kurdish men are more likely to support the HDP and Kurdish women are more likely to support the AKP. Moreover, as the household size increases, Kurdish households are more likely to support the HDP and less likely to support the AKP. Furthermore, the pro-AKP Kurds are more likely to be religious: an increase in religiosity levels decreases the likelihood of the HDP voting and increases the likelihood of the AKP voting. Lastly, the time-dummy becomes only significant in 2015, which means that the Kobani incidents in 2014 considerably influenced the Kurdish voting behavior; it increased the probabilities of the HDP voting in the city.

The financial capability parameter is statistically significant in all estimation trials. There is a strong negative relationship between financial capability ("subsist") and the HDP voting. Kurds who declare that they are financially capable tend to vote for the AKP, Kurds who declare that they are financially incapable tend to vote for the HDP. It is shown that despite their higher income (and education) levels, the pro-HDP Kurds are often not satisfied with their financial conditions compared to the pro-AKP Kurds. This contrasting pattern may be attributed to the relative deprivation of pro-HDP Kurds.

The results of regression estimation on Bağcılar show that the household income is statistically significant. This means that the income variation explains the Kurdish voting in the district. In the first two models, there is a positive relationship between the income and the HDP voting. As their income levels increases, Kurds are more likely to vote for the HDP and less likely to vote for the AKP. In the following two models, the religiosity parameter becomes statistically significant. As Kurds

become more religious, they are less likely to support the HDP and more likely to support the AKP. Moreover, age is not significant in all models, whereas gender becomes significant in the first two models. In comparative terms, Kurdish men are more likely to vote for the HDP, and Kurdish women are more likely to vote for the AKP in Bağcılar. Furthermore, the household size is statistically significant in the two models, but its explanatory power disappears with the addition of the financial capability variable to the model. Lastly, the financial capability is statistically significant, and there is a strong negative relationship between the financial capability and the HDP voting in Bağcılar. As the self-declared welfare worsens, Kurds are more likely to support the HDP and less likely to support the AKP in Bağcılar.

After all, I found out that there is a remarkable socioeconomic discrepancy between the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds. In considering the income and education parameters as a proxy to social class, it is possible to argue that that the pro-AKP Kurds are often located at the bottom of urban class hierarchies compared to the pro-HDP Kurds. In other words, the pro-HDP Kurds have higher likelihood for upward mobility than the pro-AKP Kurds.

As I will discuss in the next chapter, the lower income and education levels of pro-AKP Kurdish voters vis-à-vis the higher income and education levels of the pro-HDP Kurds become meaningful in understanding the machine and movement types of linkages of these two parties. Since I will discuss that higher income and education status make the latter group (the pro-HDP Kurds) more autonomous. In addition, the income and education discrepancies between the Turkish and Kurdish sectors have a repercussion in terms of the relative deprivation. The latter group are more likely to declare being financially incapable (or relatively deprived). Since

financial capability is statistically significant in all models, it is possible to argue that the relative deprivation argument holds true to a large extent: The relative deprivation is a critical concept in explaining the Kurdish voting for the HDP. Being independent of other factors, as much as their feeling and perception of deprivation intensified, Kurdish voters are more likely support the HDP.[129]

The relative deprivation framework attracts attention to the perception and cognition of relative deprivation in the formation of dissident subjectivities and contentious politics. We can argue that upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments comparing themselves with the dominant groups (such the Turkish middle-class and bourgeoise supporting the AKP) perceive that they live below their desired level of welfare. Indeed, it is possible to assert that as much as their desires and aspirations are not met, the feeling of relative deprivation becomes intensified. The relative deprivation of pro-HDP Kurds can be understood through "the capability approach", which constrains/facilitates one's freedom to choose his/her desired conditions (Sen 2001).

One may claim that the relatively higher contentment levels of the pro-AKP Kurds can be attributed to a second-dimension issue – i.e. the religiosity. Almost in all estimation trials, the religiosity is statistically significant and turns out to be a critical cleavage on Kurdish voting. Kurdish poor supporting the AKP might be content with their financial conditions because they believe in destiny and "God's will," which are the founding principles of the Islamic faith. Through such beliefs, the pious Kurdish poor supporting the AKP might be experiencing the material difficulties in an easier way and would seek equality and justice in afterlife. On the

[129] As it is shown through a quasi-experiment method in the previous chapter, with the same amount of income, the same level of education, the same household size, the same asset-ownership levels and the same resources (residence and auto), the higher levels of discontent and incapability increase the likelihood of the HDP voting among the Kurdish electorate.

contrary, less-religious (relatively more secular) Kurdish groups supporting the HDP might be more discontent with their material/financial conditions because they believe that equality and justice must be sought through contentious politics right now. This factor should be sought and tested on the field. Nonetheless, the fact that the income and capability parameters become statistically significant even after controlling for the religiosity shows the limits of this argument and implies that there are some other mechanisms that explain the intermediation between Kurdish poor and the AKP, upwardly-mobile Kurds and the HDP.

In the following ethnography chapters, I will discuss how the AKP and the HDP construct, catalyze, represent and articulate the class-based cleavages among Kurdish electorate on the ground. The different socioeconomic status of the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurds and the relative deprivation of the pro-HDP Kurds will be my starting point in the ethnographic analysis. In my fieldwork in Bağcılar, I took the cleavages that emerged through the statistical analysis into account, which is summarized in the Table 21.

Table 21. Likelihoods of Kurdish voting

Kurdish voting behavior - the estimation likelihoods		
Independent variables	The HDP voting	The AKP voting
Household income (↑)	higher	lower
Education (↑)	higher	lower
Financial capability (↓)	higher	lower
Household size (↑)	higher	lower
Religiosity levels (↑)	lower	higher
Age (↑)	lower	higher
Gender	More men	More women

In conducting fieldwork, I considered the results of both the Istanbul and Bağcılar estimations. Prior to the statistical analysis, I conducted 15 in-depth interviews, and after the statistical analysis, I conducted 13 in-depth and 3 focus-group interviews and made numerous participant observations in the district.

Considering the estimation results in the table, firstly, I will focus on the Kurdish poor (who are mostly religious-conservative) supporting the AKP and investigate how the clientelist-machine party (AKP) mobilize them. Secondly, I will focus on the upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments (upper echelons of working-class and a small group of middle-class) supporting the HDP, and investigate how the contentious-movement party (HDP) are appealed to and mobilize them.

The class-based differentiation between the Kurdish voters is not relevant only for the period under investigation (between 2010-2015). In order to test the continuing impact of class, I extended the analysis to 2018 while completing the dissertation. I re-run the same models with same logistic regression method (see Appendix K). The results are consistent with the previous estimations: As the income and education levels increase, Kurds are more likely to support the HDP and less likely to support the AKP. In addition, the pro-HDP Kurds are less religious and more dissatisfied (in terms of financial capability question). In addition, in order to test whether there is a continuing differentiation among only "the Kurdish working-class", I re-run models for the Kurdish sample earning below 5000 TL between 2010 and 2018 in Istanbul. I found out that there is a specific differentiation among the Kurdish working-class in Istanbul: those having higher education and income levels are more likely support the HDP, and those having lesser education and income are more likely support the AKP. These results confirm that the pro-HDP Kurds consist of upper-echelons of Kurdish working-class, whereas the pro-AKP Kurds consist of lower-echelons Kurdish working-class in Istanbul. For instance, while Kurdish white-collars and professionals are more likely to vote for the HDP, Kurdish sub-proletariat are more likely to vote for the AKP in the city.

CHAPTER 5

UNDERSTANDING VOTING BEHAVIOR IN BAĞCILAR: THE AKP AND PRO-AKP KURDS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the class-based voting for the AKP among the Kurdish electorate at the micro-level and the AKP's linkages and articulations in mobilizing the lower Kurdish class segments (which can be labeled as "poor," "informal proletariat" or "sub-proletariat") in Bağcılar. This ethnographic chapter is based on my fieldwork (in-depth interviews and participant observations) between 2014 and 2018 in Bağcılar. In the previous chapters on statistical analysis, I showed that there is a positive relationship between the socioeconomic variables (household income and education) and the HDP voting. To be more specific, an increase in household income levels increases the likelihood of HDP voting and decreases the likelihood of the AKP voting among the Kurdish electorate. In addition, an increase in education levels increases the likelihood of HDP voting and decreases the likelihood of the AKP voting among the Kurdish electorate. By interpreting these results in a comparative perspective, it is possible to say that the poorer and undereducated Kurdish segments tend to vote for the AKP in Bağcılar and in Istanbul. I argue that the conditions of deprivation, destitution and helplessness make the Kurdish poor more prone to the clientelist appeals of the AKP machine.

Previously, it is discussed that the functioning of any political machine (and establishment of hegemony) depends on its ability to produce consent among the electorate through popular (or populist) frameworks. The existing literature shows that the AKP has produced consent among the religious-conservative poor by means

of its Islamist identity and Islamic solidarity (or charity) principle. It is necessary to recognize that religiosity is a critical cleavage on the Kurdish voting behavior: the statistical estimation results indicate that, comparatively speaking, the pro-AKP Kurds are more religious than the pro-HDP Kurds. As I will discuss in the following sections, the AKP's Islamist frames (as well as Islamic intermediary mechanisms) justify and naturalize its clientelist-machine type of politics among the poor religious-conservative Kurdish electorate. Nonetheless, in order to better understand the functioning of the AKP's machine and make sense of the clientelist linkages it has established with the poor religious-conservative Kurds on the ground, we need to conduct multi-level analysis with various factors – including but not limited to poverty, clientelism, ethnicity, religiosity, Islamism, Islamic communities/tariqats, Islamic solidarity networks, and their roles in the establishment of the party's hegemony.

In this chapter, I analyze linkages and articulations of the AKP in mobilizing the Kurdish poor, and the functioning of the AKP's clientelist-machine on the ground from an ethnographic perspective. During the fieldwork some of the questions that engage my attention are as follows: How does the AKP reconstruct, catalyze and mobilize the existing class-based cleavages among Kurdish electorate in Bağcılar? Through which frames, articulations, mechanisms and networks the AKP becomes appealing to the Kurdish poor?

The ethnographic discussions in the following sections will contextualize the AKP's mobilization of poor religious-conservative Kurdish electorate within the clientelistic-machine party framework. I argue that the AKP's clientelistic-machine politics cannot be understood via short-sighted "electoral clientelism" or "vote-buying" frameworks because the party has been able to establish long-term

“relational clientelism” with the poor religious-conservative Kurdish voters especially through the locally-embedded multi-tasking co-local brokers (Nichter, 2018). Besides, I argue that Auyero’s (2001) conceptualization of “problem-solving networks” and emphasis on the “subjective dimension” of relational clientelism provide a convenient approach to understand the AKP’s grassroots mobilization of the Kurdish poor. The functioning of the AKP’s clientelistic-machine does not depend upon unidimensional “mechanical” patron-client relationship, but it is based on recognitionary processes and complemented with (or supported by) various intermediary discourses, networks, and mechanisms. In other words, the party establishes its hegemony over the Kurdish poor with the help of many assisting factors in multiple ways.

In the following sections, I will attempt to formulate and discuss the AKP’s clientelistic-machine politics in three levels: resource mobilization, space-making, and identity and cultural frames. In the first level of analysis (resources), I will discuss the role of AKP’s Kurdish brokers and associations, the establishment of clientelist-machine at the local level, the role of social assistance, problem-solving networks, and developmentalist discourses and services-politics. In the second level of analysis (space), I will discuss the Islamist space-making (Islamization of space) in the district, and the dominant Islamic communities and tariqats. I will try to map out the linkages between the Islamist actors and the party at the local level. In the third level of analysis (cultural-frames), I will discuss the AKP’s Islamist identity, anti-secularist anti-elitist framing, (historical) rupture from the past, discourse on “the internal-and-external enemies” and the leader cult or “the affective identification” with Erdoğan (*Erdoğanism*).

It is necessary to state that, although these factors are handled separately, they are closely related to each other – in fact, they are the interacting faces of the AKP's clientelist machine politics on the ground. All these factors produce consent and make the hegemony over the Kurdish voters possible. For establishing clientelist-machine on the ground, the party successfully employs multiple resources, strategies, intermediaries and discourses together. In order to show the interactions between these factors, I will start with a portrait of a young Islamist Kurd in Bağcılar.

5.1.1 A Portrait of a young Kurdish Islamist: Onur D.

Onur is 26 years-old, his registry is recorded in Karakoçan, Elazığ, but he was born and raised in a poor working-class family in Bağcılar. When we first met, he was about to get his undergraduate degree from a mediocre public university. Owing to his radical and modernist Islamist readings during his youth, he has adopted a more critical attitude than "the median conservative voter." In our initial meeting, Onur stated that he works as an administrative assistant in an Islamist association (*Araştırma ve Kültür Vakfı*) in Fatih. At the same time, he is affiliated with the *Ümran* magazine, Young Pioneers (*Genç Öncüler*) movement, and the young IHH (*İnsani Yardım Vakfı*) branch. The Islamist community-movement that he belongs to has been active since the late 1960s, it was established even prior to the famous *Akıncılar* movement. The *Ümran* magazine today has a truly Islamist political line with its emphasis on the *ummah* framework. In his adolescent years, Onur used to be a member of the socialist ÖDP (*Özgürlükler ve Demokrasi Partisi*). He first made sense of his poverty through a socialist perspective. Yet the primary reason behind his early sympathy for socialism is that his uncle was a socialist back then and took an active role in the local branches of ÖDP – his uncle once became the president of

the ÖDP Bahçelievler branch in the late 2000s. In this period, Onur used to play *bağlama* in the ÖDP's local concerts. He said that he still remembers a lot of revolutionary anthems and melodies. As he grew older and was influenced by his religious peers, Onur decided to get "repented of his sins," went to the *Kadiri* dervish lodge and became a devout member of the *Kadiri*s. Yet, over time, he realized that the Sufi perspective is not enough for him and soon later he totally rejected Sufism. Over time, Onur shifted towards a radical Islamist line, made radical readings of the Quran and identified himself with *takfir*ism.[130] During this period, he defined himself as a *Salafist* and declared politics, elections and democracy as *bidat*s.[131] A few years later, Onur noticed this type of Islamic radicalism based on the narrow-minded reading of the Quran had damaged his true belief ("*iman*"). He was disturbed by the fact that he had become suspicious of Islam itself, then he left Salafism and became a moderate Islamist.

Today, the Islamist community that Onur belongs to softly criticizes the AKP, as they are from "the same neighborhood." This community prepared a booklet on the 2017 presidential referendum, which attracts attention to the drawbacks of the AKP's proposal and calls that this might lead to a one-man rule. While keeping their criticisms, the community still support the AKP. Onur underscored that their community always prioritizes the pro-ummah politics, and thus support the AKP as long as the party provides freedom for Muslims. Despite this fact, he claimed that their community had not been "actively involved" in any political party until recently. After distancing themselves from the community, some "*brothers*" became AKP members. He said that the AKP politicians visited their community leader(s)

[130] "*Tekfirci*" only relies on Quran as a legitimate source and declares all orthodox Islamic practices (including Sunnah) as distorted.
[131] "*Bidat*" means "invented traditions" after the death of Prophet Muhammad. According to Salafist theorists, those invented traditions distorts the mainstream Islamic understanding.

several times for asking the *brothers'* opinions. Openly declaring himself as a "Kurdish citizen", Onur stressed that he was very uncomfortable with the recent shift of the AKP towards Turkish nationalism (he specifically referred to *racism* - "*kavmiyetçilik*") as well as the nepotism and the patron-client relations around the party. He underlined that he felt upset when one of his brothers made a chauvinist remark in their gatherings. He said that he was about to arrive at a critical point where his emotional break with all Islamist circles would be inevitable. Nonetheless, he tried to keep thrusting all his brothers "in the name of Islam and the Quran."

Onur recently bought an apartment from TOKİ [Mass Housing Public Administration] in Kayaşehir - a faraway quarter in Istanbul's European side. When he decided to attend the lottery for public housing sale, he did not expect to get a chance. His main motivation back then was that, if he won the lottery, he would sell the apartment to a real estate agent in a few months after the lottery so that he could get some profit (20-30 thousand TL). He had learned this profit-making strategy from a close friend doing real estate business in his neighborhood in Bagcilar. The real estate agent convinced Onur by saying, "Don't worry, if you win the lottery, I'll find someone later who'll buy it from you." However, after winning the lottery, his father somehow convinced Onur not to sell the apartment to the real estate agent but keep it for himself. Especially his father pointed to the fact that he will marry in the near future. Onur said, "it is particularly important to own an apartment at an early age in my family and kinship circle. If necessary, you must get into huge debts in order to get a house. You don't have any other option." To pay the down payment of the apartment, Onur collected 35 thousand TL from his relatives in a few days – including 2000 Euro from his uncle. With the sudden rise of the exchange rate in the last few years, he faced a serious financial loss and debt burden. But with his father's

recent retirement bonus, they were able to pay some portion of the debt – corresponding to half of the apartment's down payment. With his low monthly salary (almost 2000 TL as of 2018), Onur tried hard to pay back the debts that he had received from other relatives for the down payment and to make regular monthly payments to the TOKİ. Despite his retirement, Onur's father kept working in a printing house in Bagcilar and recently his mother also re-started to work in the textiles. Onur's salary was slightly above the minimum wage and his working conditions were not easy. If there was a gathering ("*sohbet toplantısı*") in the association he worked for, he had to stay out late, but he did not receive any overtime payment. Several times, he requested from the executives to increase his salary, but they stated it was not possible for the time being. One of his *brothers* in the association reminded him, "Don't forget *brother*, you're working here not for money, but for God's sake." Onur did not acknowledge the fact that he had been exploited by this association, as he stated that they are like his "real brothers."

In our last meeting, Onur said that he finally "gets the fruits of his patience" as he found a decent job in a prestigious pro-AKP airline company through his *brother's* contacts. He has started to work in the human resources department in this famous company with the reference of his brother from the community circle. The pro-AKP company asked the brother to find "a trusted associate with high Islamic sensibilities." The brother who has known Onur for a long time provided a good reference for him, as the whole community witnessed Onur's true commitment to the Islamic belief and practices.

The life story of Onur, a young Kurdish Islamist, gives an idea about the intersections between ethnic, religious and class identities, on the one hand, and the poverty and clientelistic relationships, on the other hand. This story reveals the

necessity of looking at both the material/class (poverty, debt, and mobility) and the cultural/identity (ethnic difference, brotherhood, indebtedness, and recognition) relationships in analyzing the political preferences of poor religious-conservative Kurdish voters. This story illuminates how the AKP's clientelist-machine operates in everyday life with the support of Islamist ideology and organization of Islamic communities. In this story, the everyday construction of Islamist ideology is interrupted with the escalation of ethnic tensions (Turks vs Kurds), but the clientelistic relationships are maintained with reference to Islamic solidarity. Based on this story, it is also possible to assert that the clientelism based on trust relations around Islamic communities has become much more critical than before in the AKP period. Departing from this discussion, this ethnographic chapter delves into the AKP's the establishment of clientelistic-machine on the ground.

5. 2 Resource mobilization

5.2.1 AKP's Kurdish brokers, associations and clientelism

As the recent literature shows, the governing AKP consolidates its power by providing personal benefits and privileges to upper classes, while distributing material inducements and offering jobs to the poor working classes. (Arıkan Akdağ, 2015; Doğan, 2016; Ark-Yıldırım, 2017; Yıldırım, 2017). In my fieldwork, I observed that there are deep-rooted patronage relationships between the Bağcılar Municipality of the AKP and these Kurdish entrepreneurs, on the one hand, widespread clientelistic relationships between the AKP brokers and Kurdish poor voters, on the other hand. There is a small group of Kurdish upper-class –primarily, small-business owners and entrepreneurs– who support the AKP and benefit from the party's patronage in Bağcılar. It is necessary to state that these businessmen also

constitute significant resource for the party. Bilal (45, Malatya, AKP member), who owns a hardware store near the central square of Bağcılar, narrates his perception of political patronage as follows:

> We did not know what politics means before migrating to Istanbul. As we only got primary education, we did not know what politics is and how it operates. But when we came to Istanbul in the 1990s, in a short period of time, we realized how politics become beneficial for us, what benefits and gains we can get from politics and politicians.

Some Kurdish entrepreneurs supporting the AKP do not hide the existence of patron-client relations constructed around the party and the municipality; they openly acknowledge that the sustainability of the patronage resources depends upon the one-party government.

> Look at us brother. We know very well that, today, there are hundreds of businessmen in Bağcılar voting for the AK Party. My Kurdish brothers, who have various companies in the district, support our party…And those businessmen of Kurdish origin do not hide their political support for the party anymore, it is obvious. In the past, perhaps those people had to hide their preferences because of the political pressure of the PKK, but today they clearly express their views in favor of the AK party. Thank God, today we have economic opportunities thanks to the AK party government, it is very precious. I know its value. I am an employer with Kurdish origin. I have 13-14 employees here in the tea garden; most of them are Kurdish.[132] And I have almost 8-10 employees in the construction business, similarly most of them are Kurdish. In total, I have almost 25 employees. I provide them employment and I contribute to the country's economy. And let me tell you, my brother, I have never discriminated any of my employees because of their ethnic identities. It is not because of my Kurdish identity; I believe in justice and equality. Today, Alhamdulillah, we have achieved great business success with economic stability. But suppose that, if all those favorable conditions become reversed in future, God forbid that, then we will collapse, we will die. We know that very well. There are hundreds of Kurdish employers and employees in our district just thinking the same way. From time to time, we meet with our business fellows. For example, there is the Bitlis Platform, in which the Kurdish businessmen and entrepreneurs come together in every 15-20 days. We talk about economic issues, such that we discuss what we can do in the existing sectors, how we can contribute to the national economy, how we can shape the economic future. There are other business associations of the southeast origin, there are many platforms, there are many NGOs in Bağcılar. In these institutions, people meet and exchange ideas - how we can unite our forces, how we can industrialize, how we can establish new firms

[132] The AKP's Bağcılar Municipality has rented the teagarden in the Fevziçakmak neighborhood of Bağcılar to Sabri for 20 years. I will depict Sabri's full lifestory in the following paragraphs.

> and businesses, how we can create new employment opportunities. We, the Kurdish businessmen and entrepreneurs, always seeks ways for contributing to the country's economy and society, we always look after our poor [Kurdish] people. Today, I estimate that about 200-250 Kurdish employers, those with the Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Van and Bitlis origins, support the AK party in Bağcılar. They provide hundreds of employment opportunities.
> (Sabri, Kurdish businessman and AKP broker, Elazığ, 50)

The narrator of the above paragraph, Sabri, does not hesitate to talk about the pervasive patronage relations (between the AKP and Kurdish employers, and between Kurdish employers and the poor working-class). Sabri justifies the upper-class position of Kurdish entrepreneurs vis-à-vis patronage relations by citing their contributions to national economy and welfare of the local people, providing employment opportunities to the poor Kurdish workers.

It is necessary to remark that, because of the dependency relations between "the entrepreneurial class" and the AKP, Kurdish entrepreneurs often function as the party brokers –either in formal or informal terms– in Bağcılar. The AKP's Kurdish brokers play a crucial role in the functioning of the local clientelist machine and in mobilizing the Kurdish electorate (Arıkan Akdağ, 2015). Analyzing the Kurdish male brokers of the party, one may easily notice that most of them have middle-class occupations – such as shopkeeper, tradesman, contractor, small manufacturer and businessman. Most of the Kurdish brokers have long-lasting political careers and have been very active at every stage of the party's local organization for many years. In fact, some brokers took active roles in the youth organization of the *Milli Görüş* movement and the RP in the 1990s. Elderly Kurdish brokers, who are well recognized and respected by the local people, act like an opinion leader. Like their Turkish counterparts, Kurdish brokers are in control of the local knowledge of their neighborhoods very well, as some of them have been living in those neighborhoods for more than 20 years. There is a considerable circulation of people in the brokers'

places. Their offices, workshops and workplaces are frequently visited by Kurdish workers, who seem to be appreciating the knowledge and advice provided by the brokers. During my several visits to the Kurdish brokers' offices, I noticed that Kurdish workers often stop by to have a quick chat or to ask for an advice and help, while drinking a cup of tea.

The AKP's Kurdish brokers try their best to help and find solutions to the poor's problems, or at least, they attempt to guide them on how to apply to relevant authorities during these brief visits. The problems of the poor that are addressed by the brokers are indeed various – finding social assistance or charity, finding rental apartments or bachelor rooms, workplace problems, neighborhood quarrels, etc. More significantly, the Kurdish brokers' places function as an informal party space where they manage and carry out on-ground operations of the AKP with the support of neighborhood representatives. Especially, before and during the election periods, I realized that the brokers' offices and workplaces are full of people who conduct all sorts of campaign work – those counting existing members and voters, recruiting new members, putting posters and banners, etc.

My observations in the AKP brokers' offices and workplaces indicate that "the entrepreneurship stories" of the brokers vis-à-vis the hegemonic neoliberal-capitalist ethos awaken respect among the poor Kurdish workers surrounding them. As Birelma (2019) states, transition from "wage work" to establishing one's own business (self-employment) is seen as the most significant way of social mobility by the poor Kurdish workers (p. 53). It is possible to argue that the AKP brokers articulate and disseminate "the success stories" among the poor Kurdish working-class as a neoliberal governmentality technique (Holborow, 2015; Betta, 2016). In my visits to Sadık's office, who is 58 years-old pro-AKP Kurdish private contractor

from Elazığ, I noticed that when he began to tell his own life story –i.e. how he started from scratch, did some manual jobs, saved some money, established his own small construction company and developed his business over time– everybody in the room listened to him very carefully and posed like they learned vital career lessons.

The brokers' entrepreneurship and upward mobility stories become especially appealing to the poor Kurdish workers who expect that they might become "rich" in the future. In my interviews with the poor Kurdish voters, I observed that they specifically underline their dreams of "being big boss" by setting up their own business or workshop – just like the AKP's entrepreneur class. In the interviews, many of them praised the stories of their relatives who had become entrepreneurs, maintaining successful businesses, buying luxury homes and cars during the AKP era. Some interviewees told that that they felt sorry about their working-poor relatives who still live in deprivation. Even some informants disparage "the idleness" of their family members and relatives for not having "an entrepreneurial spirit" at all. For instance, Onur (whose story is mentioned above) once said that he wants to make "a great deal of money as soon as possible" either through trade or entrepreneurship, but he could not find someone to talk to because all his family members and relatives are poor workers who "don't have such a spirit or vision." The neoliberal-capitalist ethos represented by the AKP's entrepreneur-brokers seems to be attractive for some Kurdish poor.

However, in constructing neoliberal articulations, the AKP's upper-and-middle-class male brokers do not want to be seen "individualistic" or "interest-seeking" in the eyes of the poor. Therefore, they pay special attention to civic activism and community services. Helping poor and needy, which is the natural extension of the Islamic charity tradition, is a critical duty for the brokers. Like their

Turkish counterparts, the Kurdish male brokers regularly visit the village and *hemşehri* associations, the mosque communities and associations, the Islamic foundations and Quran schools, and they make financial donations to the poor, elderly and students. While the party brokers of the CHP and HDP often refrain from using such traditional Islamic relations and references at the local level, the AKP brokers make use of all relevant local opportunities in mobilizing the Kurdish poor in Bağcılar. As a matter of fact, White (2002) attribute the successful organization of Islamist parties at the peripheries of Istanbul to the "vernacular politics" – "value-centered political process rooted in local culture, interpersonal relations, and community networks, yet connected through civic organizations to national party politics." By employing both patronage and local opportunities, the AKP brokers transform their party from a political instrument to well-functioning machine at the local level.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to underline that in conducting political campaigns and in terms of the everyday organization of the party, the AKP's Kurdish female brokers seem to be much more active than the Kurdish male brokers. In most cases, it is the party's female brokers who directly interact with the voters in the field. While the AKP's male brokers to large involved in formal political activities (such as congresses, district meetings, meetings with associations and foundations, etc.), the female brokers are constantly "in the field" ("*sahada olmak*"). The AKP women are the most active players of the party on the ground. Some previous studies pointed out the significance of the door-to-door party activism of the female brokers in the electoral mobilization of the Islamist parties (RP, SP and AKP) in the peripheries of Istanbul (White, 2002; Eligür, 2010).

Emel, the AKP broker (40 years old, Kurdish housewife, Malatya) narrates their "field organization" as follows:

> We are always in the field. We do not visit our electorate from election to election like other parties, we are always with them. For example, we have weekly neighborhood meetings on a regular basis. There are heads of the party in each neighborhood. There is a group of executives for each neighborhood. In my neighborhood, I am in the public relations; there is a friend of mine who conducts social affairs; another friend is responsible for the media. We are doing such division of labor. In the weekly meetings, we decide what we will do in the following week, who will be responsible for the operations and activities, how we can manage these, etc. Our officers seek the needy, disabled and elderly people in every neighborhood.

It is possible to claim that the AKP has almost entirely left the field activities to the party women in Bağcılar. A religious-conservative Kurdish broker, Behice (45, Malatya, Kurdish housewife and the AKP broker), said that she has been very active at every stage of the AKP's local organizations for the last five years – from the recruitment of new members by visiting every apartment to the participation in the FETO trials as a witness, from the distribution of the party's gifts by knocking every door in the neighborhood to the participation in mass congress meetings in Ankara, from watching the party's election campaign stand in the Bağcılar's central square to attending "the democracy watches" at the Atatürk Airport after the failed coup attempt. Comparing the efforts of the AKP's women with the party men, Behice stated that, "women in this party seem more faithful and sincerer to me, maybe it is because I see the enthusiasm of those women every day. Compared to the men, we the women have limited opportunities, but look at how we manage these limited resources and become successful." The party women spend much more effort and time in mobilizing the voters compared to the party men, who often do not want their comfort zones to be interrupted. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that it is the party women who shoulder the real burden on the ground.

In contrast to the representation of educated middle-class women in the CHP and the HDP on the urban and national levels, the AKP's housewife-brokers pay special attention to the mobilization of poor housewives (Ark-Yıldırım, 2017). The close affinity established between the AKP's female brokers and the poor religious conservative Kurdish housewives over the Sunni-Islamic norms could not have been achieved by HDP or CHP until now (Ark-Yıldırım, 2017).[133] It is necessary to remark that in mobilizing the poor Kurdish housewives, the female brokers of the AKP comply with the dominant Sunni-Islamic norms, which resonate with the religious-conservative habitus of the Kurdish housewives. At the local level, the female brokers often employ the Islamic references during the electoral campaigns and their regular visits to the poor and working-class households: They opt for religious greeting ("*selamünaleyküm*") instead of secular greetings ("*merhaba*" and "*iyi günler*"), they celebrate the Islamic days and rituals (*bayram*s, *kandil*s, and *iftar*s in Ramadan), they prefer modest and semiformal clothing (Doğan, 2016). In parallel, the party's women branch often arrange the "only lady's" seminars, talks and gatherings in the Bağcılar neighborhoods.

More significantly, the AKP's female brokers generally visit the religious-conservative Kurdish housewives when their husbands are not at home. This gesture accords with the *sharia* rule that necessitates the gathering of men and women separately ("*haremlik"* and "*selamlık"*). It is necessary to note that these home visits have not always political purposes, the party's female brokers meet with the poor

[133] "[CHP's] Home meetings were organized for men and women together, without respecting the Sunni norms and values that would have required the organization of separate visits. More generally, eliminating the female branch in its role of informal social network weakened the [CHP] party's anchoring. In an economically modest and socially conservative context, women's lives remain more focused on family problems and the needs of children. To these fundamental problems may be added conjugal violence. In a cultural context in which it is difficult for women to speak publicly in the presence of men, these issues are not raised, and the party has no occasion to propose solutions or even, as the AKP's female activists did, to express implicit solidarity by their presence in socially safe settings." (Ark Yıldırım 2017, 12)

Kurdish housewives for reading Quran and *mawlid* and for the-social-and-solidarity gatherings ("*gün yapmak*" in Turkish). These types of traditional practices are very influential on the Kurdish housewives. In the interviews, the party's female brokers said that they try to regularly visit all apartments and blocks in their neighborhoods during the Ramadan and organize informal gatherings for the housewives in the religious days. These visits and gatherings serve for the purpose of Islamic-based solidarity, and awaken the feeling of ummah among the Turkish as well as Kurdish housewives.

Moreover, the AKP's female brokers identify the urgent needs and problems of the local women, try to develop solutions for them accordingly. They deal with various issues – such as material needs, marriage problems, children's psychology, etc. It is not surprising to discern that the female brokers have successfully established "problem-solving networks" among the poor Kurdish housewives in their neighborhoods of Bağcılar (Auyero, 2001). The most significant resource that is used by the female brokers for problem-solving is social assistance and private charities. Many female brokers stated that they have access to private charities and directly distribute these party-controlled aids to the poor Kurdish women. Thus, it is possible to say that they have a good command of the local knowledge in the Kurdish-populated neighborhoods, and through this knowledge, they are able to manage the party's local organization by bottom-up and top-down strategies. It is necessary to keep in mind that, despite their emphasis on amateurish-civic-activism, the female brokers are part of the party hierarchies. They keep records of all their deeds and activities and send regular reports to the higher authorities and headquarters.

Being a Kurdish female broker of the AKP have both advantages and disadvantages. Behice states that the Kurdish language being her mother-tongue

offers a great advantage to reach the Kurdish electorate, but it is very upsetting for her to be discriminated by the people belonging to her ethnicity.

> I neither hid my Kurdish origin nor that I know the Kurdish language around the party circles or in the party activities. In fact, when they ask where I am from, I proudly say that I'm from Malatya, then if they further ask whether I speak Kurdish, I immediately reply, 'Well, if you're also Kurdish, let's talk in Kurdish,' because I feel more comfortable in my mother-tongue. You know, I have never been offended by being Kurdish or felt ashamed of my language in this party. Also, I have never discriminated anyone because of his or her ethnic identity. You know, my Kurdish identity is not a political problem. On the contrary, I see my Kurdishness as an advantage. [İK: Do you speak Kurdish in the party's home visits?] If I know that those people are Kurdish, I always say 'hello' ("*rojbaş*") in Kurdish, especially to the elderly. When I speak in Kurdish, they are delighted because they automatically suppose that I am an HDP member. But as soon as they see the bags with the AK party logo, or the AK party badge on our chests, they immediately become hostile and show their hostility. I see the feeling of unstoppable outrage in their eyes. I really feel terribly upset when I see such an outrage. After all, for God's sake, we are not enemies. We both take advantage of the same public hospital. Your kids and my kids go to the same public school. You know, our government does not discriminate in any way because of their possible affiliation with the HDP or the PKK.

In contrast to interest-seeking motivations of the Kurdish male brokers of the AKP (see Sabri's quotation and story above), their female counterparts emphasize their moral motivations they frequently define their goal as "showing the true path." Most female brokers claim that their main mission is to convey the party's "holy cause" to as much as possible. Songül (45, Malatya, Kurdish housewife and the AKP broker) narrates the Islamically-motivated activism of the party women as follows:

> In addition, a lot of people are curious about whether we are paid or not. People quite often directly ask us how much we get paid. In the name of God, we never get any money. We are volunteers. It is in our hearts; it is some kind of love affair. And I believe this activism is a spiritual duty. For example, in the month of Ramadan, I hosted thirty guests in one day, and I made meals for all of them. And on the very same day, I went to the fieldwork. So, we wandered the neighborhood again and again, we checked the records of our members in each street, we tried to recruit new members. On that day, I thought that I couldn't have done all those things within one day if it had not been in Ramadan. I was hungry and thirsty. Even in a normal day, when a guest is coming, I might feel frustrated because of the preparations, you know. But on that day, I did not become tired, Alhamdulillah. The cause of this blessing is so obvious to me: We do not pursue personal benefits or

> watch our self-interests. It is about our motherland, our nation, our flag, and so God gives us special power, Alhamdulillah! It's the sacred duty of ours. God doesn't allow its own cause to be left behind. You know, after what I went through that day, my belief of God's blessings upon this party has been strengthened once again and I have decided to commit myself entirely to the party activities. All my friends worked like superhuman during the last Ramadan. For instance, there was a 60-year-old sister who has diabetes among us, she injected her medicines on the streets, kept on the door-to-door campaign along with us. Her efforts were amazing. It's all God's blessings.

As it is seen in this narration, holy themes ("God's sake," "God's blessings," "God's will") come to the forefront in the narratives of the Kurdish female brokers. Most of the female brokers openly express their Islamic motivations in sustaining the AKP's mobilization, and underline that they do not expect the rewards of their efforts in this world. Instead, they expect to get the fruits of their deeds in the afterworld. It is possible to contend that the female brokers conduct the party activities and home visits with reference to the Islamic principle of *tebliğ*.

While the male brokers express their will for climbing upwards in the party hierarchies and getting higher positions in the party administration, only a few female brokers mention such expectations in the interviews. This is in line with the findings of Ongun (2010), who argues that while the Islamist men concentrated their efforts exclusively on upward mobility and seek their own shares from the recent capitalist restructuring of the Turkish economy, the Islamist women who had already become self-conscious through the headscarf struggle have become the dynamic force carrying the Islamist movement today.

Moreover, in contrast to the male brokers' practices in their comfort-zones and safe-grounds, the female brokers encounter with many risks and handicaps in their field activities. Kurdish female brokers claimed that they resisted the widespread hatred of the dissident (pro-HDP) Kurdish voters towards their party and

themselves in the home visits. Some of the Kurdish female brokers claimed that they have almost been attacked and lynched by the pro-HDP Kurds:

> For the time being, I work in the women's branch in the AK party, and at the same time, I am in the district administration. When we go to home visits, some of them really slam the doors on our faces. They scream at us: 'we do not want you here, get out.' I often understand from their looks and facial expressions that they support the HDP or the CHP; it is clearly seen in their faces. But we still try to present our little gifts or souvenirs, such as coffee and flowers. We have encountered serious difficulties until today. For example, after seeing the AK party bags in the hands of one of our friends, some young people tried to run over her with their car. They drove their car a couple of times into our friend, and the car passed next to her with a slight touch. For instance, I remembered that those hateful people poured a bucket of water over us from an apartment on the second floor. I mean, we really have to deal with the anger and hatred problems of those people. […] I am not saying this because I am the AK Party member, but please, believe me, we try to communicate with everyone, all sorts of people, we try to embrace each and every individual for God's sake ("*Allah rızası için*"). We do not discriminate people because of their preferences, we do not discriminate against people who vote for the CHP, the HDP or the IYI Party. (Songül)

> For instance, the doors were rudely closed to our faces. When we visit a house in the neighborhood, we first present our President's best regards to the house owners. Then we introduce ourselves, give our small gifts and then leave. That is all. We do not demand them to vote for our party or anything else in return. We make these visits to say 'hello' and get to know each other. Most of those opponents rudely close their doors as soon as hearing the name of the President Erdoğan. They just hear the name of Erdoğan and slam the door in our face. They are full of hatred.
> (Selma, 35, Siirt, Kurdish housewife and the AKP broker)

Besides individual brokers, the pro-AKP Kurdish *hemşeri* (colocal) associations function as significant intermediaries in the mobilization of Kurdish voters in Bağcılar. According to Gökmen, the Social Affairs Officer of the AKP in Bağcılar, there are roughly 500 associations in the district; most of them are *hemşehri* associations. Among those associations, the most effective ones are the *Adıyamanlılar Vakfı* (Foundation) and the *Bitlisliler Platformu*. These two associations are primarily governed by the Kurdish employers (businessmen and tradesmen) supporting the AKP. Several Kurdish interviewees confirmed that the *Bitlisliler Platform* is indeed in "a very good form" in terms of cooperation and

solidarity. There are a lot of events organized by these pro-AKP Kurdish associations throughout the year: *iftar* programs in Ramadan, daily trips out of the city, seminars on the current political-and-economic developments. In addition, through these associations, Kurdish businessmen provide basic supplies and financial assistance to the poor, and grant scholarships to the students. Gökmen stated that despite their lack of financial resources and inadequate membership fees, the small village associations have often become much more active than the large "professional" *hemşeri* associations. The Bağcılar Municipality of the AKP helps these small village associations by fulfilling their various needs and providing financial resources. In allocating the municipal resources to the village associations, the AKP also aims to reach the poor Kurdish voters. Although some village associations are similar to local coffeehouses ("*lokal*") and thus dysfunctional, most of them are still active and host wide-ranging activities, such as wedding and condolence ceremonies, *mawlid* programs, religious talks, etc. By regularly meeting with all associations and satisfying their vital needs, the Bağcılar Municipality of the AKP regularly activate a clientelistic-machine politics on the ground.

> The Bağcılar Municipality tries to gather all the NGOs in Bağcılar under a single roof. It calls the associations of the South East, the East, the West, the Black Sea in Bağcılar and brings them together. It occasionally organizes consultation meetings ("*istişare toplantısı*") with them. The municipality calls the chairmen or executives of these associations in every five or six months, ask their future projects and plans. The municipality wants to know what we can do together in the future, how we can serve our people in the best way possible. These meetings are especially important. This is a clever move for the municipality. For example, let's assume that I am from a village in Diyarbakır and my village has an association here in Bağcılar. In these meetings, I have an opportunity to report which public goods and provisions are lacking in my village. I request them from the Bağcılar Municipality, and I get them as soon as possible. By the means of the Municipality, I don't only help my villagers living in Bağcılar, but I can also send goods and services to my villagers back in Diyarbakır. For example, upon my association's request, the Municipality can build a children's park in my village, send the necessary medical equipment to the village clinic, and renovate my village school in Diyarbakır. The Municipality helps all colocal ("*hemşehri*") associations

> without any discrimination. It helps all regions and does not make distinctions between Kurds or Turks. It is great to see all those different people come together with the call of the municipality. You know, nowadays, we're in the month of Ramadan; prior to the Ramadan, the Bağcılar Municipality gathered all the NGOs and associations together and said, 'Dear Friends, please make iftar organizations to your *hemşehri*s and fellows, and let me help you with the meal, tables, and chairs. It's just your duty to gather your own people together and we'll manage all necessities.' I mean our only mission is to commune with our own people ("*hasbihal etmek*"). You see, it's fantastic! Yesterday, I attended a grand *iftar* dinner organized by eight different NGOs and associations, which gathered their own countrymen together, in groups of 100 to 200 people. Most of them are Kurdish. It is the Municipality that arranged the meeting place, gave the chairs and tables and the food. The organizers didn't make distinctions between the poor and the rich, between Turkish and Kurdish people, so we sat in the same table, it's really the communal table ("*halil ibrahim sofrası*"). In these platforms, we become united, and we become communal. (Sabri)

Besides the AKP municipality, the Kurdish brokers and pro-AKP Kurdish associations maintain and reproduce the clientelistic-machine politics among the poor Kurdish voters in Bağcılar. It is especially necessary to underline their efforts to maintain Islamic-based solidarity and deliver material inducements and general benefits to local people.

5.2.2 Establishment of the clientelistic-machine

The AKP's Bağcılar Municipality facilitated the integration of the Kurdish businessmen and tradesmen (mostly pettybourgeoisie) in the 2000s and 2010s. The Municipality aims to overcome the (potential) ethnic tensions between Turkish and Kurdish sectors in order to establish the AKP's clientelistic-machine in the district. Sabri describes this process as follows:

> The Bağcılar Municipality brought the Turkish and Kurdish businessmen from the Black Sea and Southeastern regions together in Bağcılar and declared their companies and associations as sister institutions. The Municipality did such excellent work to integrate them, to make them friends. About a year ago, our municipality brought the Bitlis Platform and the Zonguldak Platform together in a massive meeting. I mean almost five thousand people gathered in a large hall. In this organization, the MPs and the mayors of the region arrived, such a great organization took place in Bağcılar.

> In fact, the ethnic prejudices have disappeared in the last few decades in our district. Twenty years ago [in the 1990s], maybe there was a bit of discrimination towards us [i.e. Kurds]. I mean, the businessmen from the Black Sea region were approaching the people of Southeast with caution. But now we are in the process of integration thanks to the initiatives of the Municipality. Ethnicity does not matter anymore; people do not have such ethnic problems anymore. Bağcılar's businessmen of Kurdish origin appreciate the current conditions very well. The municipality encourages us to become business partners. Thanks to our municipality, the two large textile companies, one from the Southeast and the other from the Blacksea region, have recently become business partners.

Apart from the political patronage provided to the Kurdish businessmen, the AKP provides widespread clientelistic resources to the Kurdish poor and working-class in the district. The poor Kurdish voters directly apply to the AKP offices for requesting social assistance, housing, employment, etc. Although it is possible to discern different forms of clientelism among the Kurdish poor in the district, as Sayarı (2011) argues, the most critical subject to clientelism is the permanent employment, especially, in public sector. An HDP activist, Dilan (32, Tatvan), told the story of her poor Kurdish neighbor who used to be member of the AKP for a long time and found his job through clientelistic means in Bağcılar as follows:

> In the last election, I was a party supervisor, I oversaw eight ballot boxes in a school for the HDP in Bağcılar. There was also this AKP supervisor, Murat brother, in this school. I knew him very well because he is our neighbor, who was also Kurdish from Adıyaman. We have met each other several times in the school corridors and talked a little bit. He was bringing me a cup of tea, and in turn, I was providing him some snacks. There is no problem in this exchange, you know, because we are close neighbors. As far as I remember, Murat worked either in the municipality or in a government office. I heard that they fired him just after the elections, I guess, because of the defeat of the AKP. After the election day, I saw Murat on our street and asked him how he was doing. He said that they were packing. I asked him what happened and felt sorry. I could not help but asked him: 'Murat brother, did you really come close to the AK party in order to find a job?' He said, 'We are living in Istanbul, you know, life isn't easy here. We did not get educated as you did, so we had no better options. I had to take shelter somewhere, I had no choice. I gave the AK party my labor and my efforts, then they fired me without mercy. I feel deeply regret my decision now. Maybe we have to move back to Adıyaman.' I can guarantee he is a deeply religious man, a true believer. Later, I heard that he could not find such a good job here [i.e. Istanbul] and moved back to Adıyaman with his family.

As it is seen in this narrative, the clientelist relationships between the Kurdish poor and the AKP are very widespread in the area of employment. In numerous interviews, the AKP patrons-brokers stated that not only Turkish poor but also the Kurdish poor came to the party offices and asked for various favors from the party. However, the clientelist relationships between the AKP and the Kurdish poor are not always tangible, as they depend upon the favorable economic and political conjuncture. The chances of the Kurdish poor benefiting from the AKP is often correlated with the higher economic development. In addition, Kurdish voters are valuable for the party only if they would bring significant share of votes at the expense of Turkish nationalist support. Günay and Yörük (2019) argue that after the economic slow-down in the late 2010s, "the AKP's class-based inclusion project significantly weakened among the Kurdish poor. With the decline in economic growth, the government's capacity of welfare provision and resource distribution also declined" (p. 39). With the shift of the AKP from Islamic communitarianism to Turkish nationalism since 2015, some of the poor Kurdish voters are inevitably excluded from the clientelist resources (Günay & Yörük, 2019).

Despite widespread clientelism, the AKP officials in Bağcılar state that they are very uncomfortable with the favor(itism) demands; they underscored their "professionalism" in the interviews. The vice-president of the AKP Bağcılar narrates the tensions between the professionalism and favor(itism) demands as follows:

> I started my political life at the AK Party youth branches. Before that, I had never thought about the possibility of demanding some favor from a political party. But people visiting our party used to demand favors. It is quite inconvenient for me. You can see all sorts of people demanding something from our party – money, job, apartment, husband, wife. They seek all sorts of things from the party. They tell their problems, I am listening, making suggestions, and trying to find a solution. But they do not listen. Some of them said, 'I'm a member of this party since its foundation. You must do me a favor.' I told them: "Whether you are a member or not, your wish is inappropriate. You're an ordinary citizen, and I'm a political organization."

> We the AK party are against favors. We are trying to explain this fact. I tell our visitors that they cannot directly get help from the political party. The district governor shall provide assistance on behalf of the state, the municipality shall provide assistance on behalf of the local government. But our party is the wrong address. I am always telling where and how to apply for help. The current condition is not that bad, we have achieved some success in professionalization. […] Yesterday, again, someone came here with the request of registering his child to high-ranking public school in Bağcılar. He asked me to do a favor by calling the principal of the school, I said I cannot. I cannot understand how those people beg for that kind of favors. I said that I am against all sorts of favoritism. Since this man is a long-time party member, I nonetheless phoned the district governor and explained him the case. The governor backed me up, and we decided not to do a special favor to this man. But then, I have learned from someone else that the service-bus-driver of this school registered his own son to the very same school despite his low exam scores. I am devastated. [İK: I do not understand why you are devastated?] I mean, if the school's driver is registering his kid, then I am screwed up. Because this guy can say 'Oh, then, the school's driver is more influential than the vice-president of the AK party in Bağcılar.' I am trying to behave ethically, but if somebody does it, I have no option but do it as well. I do not want these incidents to happen, but unfortunately, they do not leave us alone.

In order to prevent clientelistic relations and demands for favors, the AKP in Bağcılar has tried to transform itself from volunteer-based to professional-based organization. During my participant observations in the AKP headquarters in Bağcılar, I noticed that the party act like a professional company in its organization and career-management. In one of my first visits to the AKP headquarters, I realized that the party hires professional employees for the upcoming election campaign. A lot of young people who want to be employed for the next elections leave their CVs to the headquarters. In addition, I noticed two signs of the professionalization in my participant observations in the AKP Bağcılar: first, the leadership of the local organization consists of the professional-class (entrepreneurs, businessmen and tradesmen), and second, the opportunity that the party provides to young men to make professional political careers from ground-level neighborhood activism to the top-level party administration. The AKP's top executives in the district generally consist of self-employed entrepreneurs. For example, Gökmen, the party executive

responsible for social affairs, has a tourism agency office and work with national and international airways. Those who have climbed up to the top positions in the district administration belong to upper-and-middle classes, most of whom are well recognized and respected for their entrepreneurship stories besides their political careers. However, as Gökmen stated in the narrative above, despite the professionalization of the party organization at the local level, they cannot stop the demands for clientelism/favoritism on the ground. It is because clientelism is not only about the supply-side of the politics, but also the demand-side – citizens as customers continuously ask for clientelistic requests.

In line with the AKP's professionalization attempt, the party officials claim that they handed out all social assistances to the Bağcılar Municipality and the Social Solidarity Foundation (under the District Governorship) in order to eliminate clientelism. One party official puts forward that the relationships between the AKP, the Municipality and the Governorship are indeed like "professional inter-company relations." Nevertheless, a few AKP officials and brokers do not hesitate to express their contact with the social assistance offices of the municipality and the governorship. An AKP official states that "in the urgent cases" they call the Social Solidarity Foundation themselves and ask for immediate help. This fact implies that, despite the contrary statements, the clientelistic relations between the party and the poor continue at the local level.

The AKP sometimes establishes clientelistic relationships with the poor by means of the businessmen in Bağcılar. Despite very few in numbers, Kurdish bourgeois and petty-bourgeoisie supporting the AKP are "generous" and "charitable" towards the Kurdish poor. In some cases, the AKP provide special favors and inducements (such tender offers) to the Kurdish businessmen and request them to

look after their *hemşehri*s, who are needy and poor. As a matter of fact, many informants point out to the fact that a Kurdish rentier-class close to the AKP municipality has emerged in the district. The Kurdish rentier-class especially consists of the private contractors undertaking the local urban transformation projects and/or the subcontracted municipal services. The high GDP growth and macroeconomic stability achieved, on the one hand, the high-volume of trade (especially regarding textiles) and booming of construction sector in and around Bağcılar, on the other hand, enable a small group of Kurdish businessmen to make considerable profits in the 2000s and early 2010s. These businessmen make financial/material donations to the party for distributing to the poor. In the interviews, a few prominent pro-AKP Kurdish businessmen enthusiastically explained how their business prospered thanks to the government and how they established solidarity with their poor fellows at the local level. The Kurdish businessmen share some of their profits with the Kurdish poor either by creating employment opportunities or making donations.

In this context, it is worth mentioning the life story Sabri in detail, as it illuminates the nature of the clientelistic relations built around the AKP machine. In his childhood years, Sabri and his family were subjected to the state violence in their village. On a winter night in the early 1970s, commandos raided their village, dragged the Kurdish men in the village square and beat them in front of their wives and children. Sabri, who was so scared of the soldiers that night, has never thought becoming a pro-Kurdish militant ("*Kürtçü*") or "an enemy of the Turkish state." With their father's support, Sabri and his brothers decided to migrate to Istanbul in the early 1980s. After his migration, Sabri worked in the service sector, especially he worked as a bellboy and waiter in restaurants. Sabri said that "my nature was always inclined towards being an entrepreneur;" he established his own small restaurant by

borrowing money from his relatives in Beyoğlu after the military service. However, he had to close the restaurant because of the low-profit margin, and instead invested his money to set up patisserie in a close neighborhood. During his youth years, he realized "the foreign plots against the citizens of Kurdish origin" and joined the *Milli Görüş* movement with the hope of contributing to the Muslim brotherhood between Turks and Kurds. In the 1990s, Sabri became very active in the local organization of RP in Bağcılar; he met with Erdoğan a couple of times while he was the mayor and received a certificate of honor directly from Erbakan *hoca* appreciating his services to the party. In the early 1990s, through the tender procedure, he started to rent the Fevzi Çakmak teagarden café that belongs to the RP's Bağcılar Municipality – his close contacts in the party, of course, helped him to make a contract with the Municipality at the time. Sabri has been running this tea garden for 25 years.

In the early 2000s, like all local cadres, Sabri was sided with "the reformist wing" against "the traditionalists" and transferred to the AKP. Sabri said, "*Alhamdulillah*, we were not deceived at a time. We are able to maintain our services under the flag of the AK Party." Today, he is an active member of the AKP Bağcılar District Executive Board. Sabri continues to be extremely popular figure in the neighborhood, his tea garden functions as an informal gathering place for hundreds of AKP brokers and supporters. Sabri always hosts guests in his office in the tea garden. He devotes most of his time to the people who have urgent problems or needs – he is not only a political patron, but also a real brother figure – he does not discriminate between the upper or lower classes. In parallel, he also tries to keep up with the party's activities in the district; he attends almost all party meetings. Furthermore, Sabri was recently involved in the construction business. As a private contractor, he has benefited from the "the disaster law" that paved the way for the

urban renewal projects. In accordance with the urban transformation policy, Sabri's construction team pull down the old apartment buildings (usually unlicenced *apartkondu*s with 3-4 floors) and replace them with modern multi-story apartment buildings in a relatively short time.

In an interview, when I asked Sabri's opinion about the AKP's recent shift towards Turkish nationalism, he stated that he has not been disturbed by "such tactical rhetoric." He still believes that the Islamic brotherhood spirit persists within the party circles. He further stated that "those who feel uncomfortable with AKP's nationalism are indeed the Kurdish separatists of the HDP." He said that "Kurds can speak their own language freely today. Kurds have every right to become governor, deputy, and minister today. We have the same status and the same rights as our Turkish friends. What else we can demand further?" I visited Sabri three times. After an informal meeting with him on an evening in Ramadan 2017, the party's neighborhood brokers joined us. Sabri carefully introduced each of them by their names and emphasized that they are all "dedicated" Kurdish workers. Those Kurdish worker-brokers called Sabri "the president" with a deep respect. In my presence, they made a semi-formal meeting – discussing their recruitment activities and shortcomings of the party in the neighborhood. In Sabri's story, there are two faces of clientelism: On the one hand, the rewards that Sabri acquire for himself through his intimate relationship with the RP and the AKP, and on the other hand, the benefits that Sabri provide as a patron-broker to the Kurdish poor workers around him. As it is seen in the Sabri's story, it is necessary to recognize that, clientelist relations have not emerged with the AKP governments. The poor migrants are always prone to the clientelist machine politics of the rightist-or-Islamist parties.[134]

[134] In an interview with a conservative Kurdish housewife, she underlines that her family always supported the rightist parties (ANAP in the 1980s, RP in the 1990s and AKP in the 2000s) for their

In the mobilization of poor voters and in the production of inter-class consent, clientelistic relations have been effectively employed by the governments from the 1950s onwards. As it is argued previously, clientelistic machines became apparent around the phenomenon of *gecekondu* and most effective in the peripheral slums of Istanbul, which indeed effaced the leftist grassroots heritage.

It is necessary to underscore that there is a strong tendency among the leftist and pro-HDP Kurdish voters (especially among the middle-classes) that underestimates the material expectations of the Kurdish poor voters and despises their use of clientelistic means. Even some of the HDP's Kurdish officials and activists in Bağcılar state that they cannot understand how the AKP mobilizes the poor Kurds through "such basic and inferior means." They believe the AKP "is deceiving those poor people with promises of employment and by providing basic gifts." They stated that the AKP distributes packages of basic home supplies, food, kettle, coffee, tea, and money (and some cited notebooks and 1-gram gold) in their home and shop visits in exchange for votes. In an interview, the HDP's ex-co-chair in Bağcılar, Cevat (45, Bitlis), accuses the Kurdish poor for receiving those supplies and gifts for being "cheap people."

> When I came to Bağcılar, one of the first things that I did was home visits. In such a visit, an old Kurdish housewife opened the door. I introduced myself; I said I am coming from the AKP [although he is the executive of the DTP]. The very first thing she said was that they are poor. Then, I walked into the house, sat down, looked around, especially at their furniture, and it seemed to me that this family is not actually poor. They seemed to be self-sufficient, I mean, they must have some income. Then, I asked, 'What do you need?' She said that they need food and coal for the coming winter, and later she said, her husband needs a proper job. I said, 'OK, sister, I'll give you all those things under one condition." There was a DTP at the time. I disclosed my DTP identity; then I went on: 'If you give your vote to DTP, I'll give you all of your needs.' They became surprised and embarrassed, then their faces turned into red. Then the housewife went to the other room and brought the Qur'an.

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pro-poor and conservative policies, except one election: They voted for the DSP in the 2002 general elections, because her brother, who had been convicted for an attempt of murder, got out of prison with the DSP's proposal for the general amnesty (known as "*Rahşan affi*") in the 2001.

> She said, 'I swear on this Qur'an that we're Kurdish and we'll give our voters to the DTP.' I asked why they want all those items in the first place. They could not answer. They used to do it – they are begging. I mean, they got used to receive charity.

The HDP activists' underestimation, and sometimes despising, of the material expectations of the poor from the AKP have indeed limited their mobilization capacity among the Kurdish poor in the metropolis (Yörük & Üstündağ, 2014).[135] Similarly, leftist parties and movements affiliated with the HDP have not paid enough attention aspirations of the urban poor and the critical role of clientelistic networks that the AKP established in the deprived urban areas (Kapusuz, 2014).

5.2.3 Social assistance, problem-solving networks and relational clientelism

In 2017, the AKP's Bağcılar Municipality initiated the *Gönül Bağı* ("Love Bond") project, which is a "citizen-centered urban movement for solidarity and cooperation" in order to help the poor and needy at the district.[136] Although the *Gönül Bağı* campaigns were first conducted by the AKP's neighborhood brokers, in short period, the project became quite popular. Described either as philanthropic or Islamic-based charity movement by the AKP supporters, today *Gönül Bağı* is the largest publicly-sponsored civic initiative in Istanbul with more than 10,000 volunteers. Under the rubric of this movement, the volunteers (the party brokers as well as "neutral" participants) visit hundreds of streets and thousands of households regularly and ask whether they need any material or moral support – see Figures 31, 32 and 33. The project officials stated that, as of November 2019, their volunteers visited 160 thousand homes in Bağcılar. The volunteers distributed food packages, clothes and other goods provided by the municipality and the private sector to the poor and the

[135] There is a notorious and stigmatizing phrase that is used by the secular-urban-upper-class in defining the AKP's poor electorate: "*makarnacılar*" (people who vote for a package of pasta).
[136] For their activities see, www.gonulbagi.org and @gonulbagi34 account in Twitter and Facebook.

needy. However, material assistance is just one facet of the project, more significantly, the volunteers provide moral support to excluded, marginalized and neglected people. The volunteers act like the locally-embedded and problem-solving brokers.

Fig. 31 Twitter post of the Gönül Bağı (1)

Fig. 32 Twitter post of the Gönül Bağı (2)

Fig. 33 Twitter post of the Gönül Bağı (3)

It is necessary to underline the Bağcılar Municipality's social projects are quite popular and credible compared to the other districts of Istanbul. In addition to *Gönül Bağı* project, the municipality provides free social services, such as free food, basic supplies, healthcare and home cleaning to the poor and elderly in other social projects. It is especially necessary to cite the Life Support Project and the Charity Bazaar. Through these two projects, the basic needs of 30 thousand poor families were met by the municipality in 2017. Within the scope of the Life Support Project, which was founded 11 years ago, the home-cleaning (including laundries and dishes) of 420 elderly people are made on a monthly basis by the municipality's social workers (Yeni Şafak, 2017). On special occasions (especially in *bayrams*), the same social workers carefully provide personal care (such as haircuts, shaving and nail care) to the elderly and needy people are provided.

One of the most critical aspect of the AKP's clientelist-machine is the distribution of (regular and irregular) social assistance. Although formal social assistance is in the hands of the Social Solidarity Foundation of the District Governorship, the AKP officials have sometimes power to intervene in the distribution of assistance. Some party officials admitted that, in urgent cases, they make phone calls to the governor's office and request a monetary or in-kind assistance to those in need. In my participant observations, I realized that there is continuous coordination between the Governorship, the Municipality and the AKP's Bağcılar branch about social assistance. These three institutions act in close cooperation in specifying who are poor and needy and whether they have received any assistance or not. In the interviews, the AKP officials stressed that they want to be sure that the existing assistance programs cover all poor people in the district, they stated that the party really care about poverty issue because Islam beliefs command cooperation and solidarity.

Analyzing the social policies in the AKP era, Buğra (2017) argues that social assistance is distributed with "the charity logic" by the party and have thereby a discretionary character. However, I observed that although informal/irregular social assistance (provided by the Municipality and the private sector) could be distributed with discretion, the means-tested social assistance provided by the District Governorship is almost non-discretionary and thus non-clientelistic in Bağcılar. For instance, two of my Kurdish informants, who are executive members of the HDP and do not hide their political identity in public, continue to receive social assistance from the Governorship and assert that politics is irrelevant in the context of the formal social assistance. In the same vein, in her analysis of the social assistance programs in Bağcılar, Tafolar (2015) confirms that the AKP did not make the

conditional cash transfer programs (CCTs) a bargaining issue of clientelism at the local level. Nonetheless, she specifies that the regular and formal CCTs exist side by side with the entrenched clientelistic networks between the brokers and the poor. That is to say, in addition to non-clientelistic (non-mediated) social assistance programs, the AKP also applies widespread clientelistic aids (Tafolar, 2015).

Besides the social assistance programs of the governorship, the Bağcılar Municipality provides a considerable amount of monetary and in-kind aids to the poor and needy people. For instance, the municipality provides monthly "soldier" income to those families whose children are doing their mandatory military service and provides some amount of financial support to those families affected by the natural disasters (such as fire or flood) in the district. The municipality distribute thousands of food packages, shopping coupons and *iftar* tickets during the Ramadan. It is difficult to assess whether the municipal aids are discretionary or not. In the interviews, the AKP executives stressed that the municipality do not make any discrimination in the distribution of social assistance, and further claimed that they have completely effaced poverty from Bağcılar with the social assistance programs of the municipality in the last 20 years. The AKP officials stated that the poor Kurdish households are the most significant recipient of the municipal aids in the district. The officials claimed that the municipality does not regard any racial/ethnic criteria in the distribution of aids. They underline that the Kurds of Bitlis is the largest recipient of social aids, which is in fact not surprising because the Bitlis Kurds are the most populous group in the district.[137]

[137] Yörük (2013) claims that the AKP provides more social assistance to Kurds than Turks in order to absorb the Kurdish resistance. The question that needs to be addressed is whether the poor Kurds receive social assistance in exchange for their support for AKP or not. It is challenging to find empirical support on this issue, as the KONDA dataset offers a limited number of observations on the social assistance question – only 53 Kurdish respondents in Bağcılar stated that they are recipients. Among the pro-AKP Kurds, 28 people declared that they get social assistance, whereas among the

Nevertheless, it is necessary to remark that municipality-controlled private-sector aids are most often distributed by the AKP brokers in the district. The volume of private sector donations, which are indeed hard to specify, change throughout the year. Private donors deliver a considerable amount of resources to the AKP brokers for alleviating poverty in the district. The businessmen who provide those private donations are presumably the supporters of the party or those who have business interests with the party. In the interviews, some brokers recurrently underlined that they distribute private donations "equally and impartially."

> Outsiders think that we are just helping the AK party supporters. This is false. We treat all social groups equally. We even try to help Syrians. If someone really needs help, such as those living in the basement or those housewives whose husbands cannot work because of illness, we provide assistance to them for sure. [İK: I guess; you don't mean the municipal aids?] Those wealthy volunteers also donate a lot. Businessmen, especially the big ones in the food industry trust us and bring their donations. Especially, in Ramadans, with God's blessing, our people make huge donations. For example, a rich businessman comes to the party and says that he wants to make a ton of food donation. Seeking for the needy people to help, he contacts the AK party officials because our officials know every neighborhood very well. He delivers his donation to us and we start distributing food packages. You know, these rich people cannot go to the poor people by themselves, they need intermediaries, so they necessarily come to the party officials. Party officials always keep in touch with the poor and needy people. These are non-state aids from the volunteers, I mean, from the private sector. The state indeed makes its duty properly. But also, we distribute these donations from the private sector under the control of the municipal officials and the party's district executives. We keep the records of the households that we deliver food and money.
>
> (Refika, 35, Bitlis, Kurdish housewife and the AKP broker)

The AKP brokers have access to both public and private resources; through these resources, they meet the basic needs of the poor electorate. It is necessary to discern that the distribution of the municipally controlled private aids allow the AKP

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pro-HDP Kurds 6 people declared that they get social assistance. The number of those Kurds receiving social assistance from the governorship and the municipality is 22 for the AKP, 5 for the HDP. An analysis of this small sample shows that the pro-AKP Kurds receive more social assistance than the HDP Kurds. Therefore, there is a possibility of clientelistic exchange.

brokers to come into direct contact with the Kurdish poor. These aids are not distributed through mechanical ways but involve the establishment of long-term relations. In the process of distribution of aids and gifts, a subjective-intimate relationship between the party brokers and the Kurdish poor is established.

> Unfortunately, I moved to this neighborhood a year ago, I am quite new here. I did not have any knowledge of this place beforehand. So, the very first thing I did was that I went to the variety store ["*tuhafiyeci*"], introduced myself to the saleswoman and tried to get preliminary information about the poor and needy people of the neighborhood. The saleswoman was so helpful, she told me the names and addresses of those needy in our neighborhood. I took notes regarding those people, then I transferred my notes to my administrator, who have informed the municipality about those people. In such cases, after we specify the needy people in our neighborhoods, the municipality comes in and provides supplies, food packages, coal, and other stuff to the needy. [İK: So, you become some sort of an intermediary?] Of course, we send the information of the neighborhood to our admins. We have strict coordination. The admins report this information to the AKP Bağcılar branch. Because poor people thrust us. You know, our people say a cup of coffee commits one to forty years of friendship. In the last elections, we handed coffee to all voters without discriminating.
>
> (Emel, 40, Malatya, Kurdish housewife and the broker)

In such encounters, the brokers establish trust relationships between the poor and the party. The brokers do not only provide inducements or handouts, but also try to find solutions to all-sorts of problems in both material and moral terms. Trust relations between the AKP brokers and the Kurdish poor are significant because this creates the basis of intimacy and concrete ground for shared morality. The brokers stated that they are not only active during the election periods but maintain a strong presence on the field throughout the year. On the one hand, the female brokers organize regular home visits to housewives to specify their needs and demands. Especially, they visit patients, elderly, pregnant women and mothers with newborns. On the other hand, the male brokers organize small gatherings after the Friday prayers with the pious poor and hold regular meetings with the village associations on a regular basis to specify the material necessities in the neighborhoods.

Although there are numerous studies indicating the AKP's clientelistic relations with the poor, especially in the form of the "vote-buying" and "distribution of handouts" (Çarkoğlu & Aytaç, 2015), there are only a few studies that address the subjective-intimate relationships that the AKP brokers establish with the poor through the principle of Islamic solidarity. These subjective-intimate relationships involve several dimensions: recognition, respect, protection, brotherhood, and sisterhood. These relationships do not only entail material exchanges but also provides feeling of integration and cultural representation to the poor. Gunes-Ayata (1994) argues that the clientelist relationships produce "a sense of belonging to imagined community" for the poor (p. 21). Considering the "uprootedness, anxiety and insecurity" and "the feeling of helplessness" of the poor migrants in the urban context, the subjective-recognition dimension of clientelism becomes very crucial in their lives (Gunes-Ayata, 1994, p. 22).

It is possible to argue that clientelism becomes especially relevant for those experiencing migration, poverty, precarity and vulnerability. Kurdish migrants have often been discriminated, stigmatized and excluded - in terms of housing, work, wage and everyday life - by the old secular Turkish Istanbulites for a long time, and this "sense of distance" has alienated the Kurdish poor from the secular Turkish groups (Perouse, 2016). In this context, AKP's "relational clientelism" involves a compassionate attitude based upon the principles of Islamic solidarity and charity towards the poor Kurdish migrants. Especially through problem-solving networks, the AKP brokers are able to recognize the fragile subjectivity of the Kurdish poor. A party member describes their problem-solving networks in the district as follows:

> We do not distribute food packages only during the election campaigns or the month of Ramadan like other parties, we always support the poor and needy people throughout the year. Our party has an organization in every neighborhood of Bağcılar and Istanbul. These organizations try to keep up

> with the urgent needs of people. While providing assistance to the poor, we do not look at the religious, racial, ethnic or linguistic differences among them. This assistance can be both material and moral. If the voter has a particular problem, we are dealing with it, we are trying to solve his problem. So, the success of the AK party lies behind this fact. […] We interpret the act of caring poor and needy as our holy duty. Therefore, we are always on the field, 365 days of a year. We do not visit those people from an election to an election like other parties. In 365 days of a year, we care about the deprived, injured, and oppressed people. Let us assume that a citizen experiences some sort of injustice in Bağcılar. It is just enough for this citizen to reach our representatives in the neighborhood. If he says that he is having some trouble and seeking a solution from the municipality or the state authorities, then the rest is our duty. We try to solve him problem. If there is an injustice, we are trying to resolve this injustice. We convey the problems we have specified in the neighborhoods to our superiors – to the deputy mayors. In this way, our fieldwork continues for 365 days. For example, there is an election on June 24, you know, two days after the election we will restart the fieldwork. We are different from other parties because we develop personal relations; we visit all voters personally. On a regular basis, we meet with the employers and the headmen of the 22 neighborhoods in Bağcılar. We exchange ideas with them. We meet with the school principals in Bağcılar in every 2 to 3 months; we get information about the material and moral status of the students in their schools. We are especially trying to help orphans and poor children. We try to reach everyone. Our fieldwork continues throughout the year.
>
> (Kemal, 50, Bitlis, AKP official)

As it is seen in this narrative, the brokers establish subjective-intimate relationships with the poor by paying attention to their actual problems, concerns and expectations. The subjective dimension of the AKP's clientelism entails the construction of imagined communities or moral communities at the neighborhood level. With the performance of the brokers towards material and moral solidarities, the party aims to establish enduring symbolic and affective community. It is necessary to emphasize that the recognition politics becomes as significant as the redistribution politics for the poor because their voices are hardly heard in politics. The AKP's strategy of representation and recognition of the poor through the efforts of the party brokers are critical in terms of meaning-making in the context of urban poverty and deprivation. Due to harsh political and economic pressures since the 1980s, leftist parties and movements lost their capacities to mobilize the poor in

urban space, and today they cannot keep contact with the Kurdish poor "from below" as the AKP does in the neighborhoods.

Yılmaz (2015) argues that the AKP's relationship with the urban poor cannot be understood from the perspectives of "vote-buying" and "the charity society." Besides, the party's relationship with the poor cannot be grasped as a formal exchange in the context of "market society." It is necessary to recognize that, with the involvement of the brokers, the poor have developed emotional identification with the AKP. With the principle of Islamic solidarity and benevolence, the party produces an imagined community among the pious poor voters. This community-building practice involves reciprocity, indebtedness, and trust.

Nevertheless, this pro-poor representation is not uniform among the AKP members and supporters. Some upper-class members of the AKP articulate their discontent with the clientelistic networks of the party. Even a few upper-class Kurdish supporters of the AKP opposes the "charity" logic: they claim that the party accustoms the poor to "laziness" and "beggary" - which reminds the stigmatization related with "the culture of poverty" frame of the 1960s. Also, the pro-HDP Kurds sometimes share these anti-charity views and despise the AKP's social assistance.

Nonetheless, a few HDP activists are aware of the perils of underestimating the social assistance and criticize the HDP's "passive attitude" towards the problems of the Kurdish poor. In a closed party meeting before the 2015 general elections, the DBP's co-president, Mustafa, (see also Chapter 6) reminds that their party could not perform a strong presence on the field and recommends all HDP activists to keep continuous contact with the poor Kurdish voters in their own streets and neighborhoods. Mustafa suggests that if their party do not organize among the poor Kurdish people, AKP along with Islamic communities and tariqats fill the vacuum

and “deceive poor people.” Despite their lack of financial resources, Mustafa believes that they can still provide problem-solving networks to their fellows and neighbors – at least they could drink a cup of tea together to keep their contact.[138]

5.2.4 Developmentalism and politics of services

In the last 20 years, the AKP has utilized two particular frames in mobilizing the poor and working-class in national and urban contexts: the neoliberal-developmentalist discourse and the politics of service (Küçük & Özselçuk, 2015). In the interviews, the poor Kurdish informants praised the AKP’s efforts for the local development projects and delivering public services to the Bağcılar. According to the Kurdish interviewees, along with the country's economic prosperity, Bağcılar has transformed from a “suburb” or “village” into a modern city in the last two decades with the efforts of the RP and AKP local governments. As a matter of fact, Bağcılar was a small peripheral town attached to the Bakırköy Municipality until 1992, then it became a municipal district with the integration of Kirazlı, Güneşli and Mahmutbey neighborhoods. Most of the Kurdish informants, who had come to Istanbul as a result of the forced migration and dispossession, faced further with material deprivation, poor living conditions and lack of infrastructure in Bağcılar in the 1980s and the 1990s. The informants said that they had to stand on their own feet; they only got (financial and moral) support from their own relatives and kin members.

A Kurdish informant who migrated to Istanbul in 1985 stated that just after his migration to Bağcılar, he bought a sheep and two goats. He used to graze his animals on the pasture lands of central Bağcılar, where now the crowded apartment buildings lied in the narrow streets. Another Kurdish interviewee suggested that

[138] “*Çay içmek*” in Turkish, sometimes, implies meeting, communion, and cooperation.

Bağcılar was like a huge village; there was no paved roads in the streets of the district in the 1980s; the dwellers had to wear construction boots because of the muddy streets. Feyzullah Kıyıklı, the first mayor of Bağcılar from the RP, played a significant role in the "modernization" of Bağcılar and carried his mayor position on for four local elections from the 1990s onwards – as he transferred into the AKP with his own organization in 2002. He is still a popular figure among locals. Kıyıklık is portrayed as a local hero in many narratives of because of his service delivery. Nevertheless, many Kurdish interviewees believe that it was Erdoğan, not Kıyıklık, who made the real progress for the district. Those Kurdish informants underlined that, during the Erdoğan's administration in the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality between 1994 and 1998, the muddy roads of the district were paved with asphalt, the sewerage system and the water infrastructure were completed, and the public access to clean water was provided.

One of the most frequent themes in the interviews with the Kurdish poor is the lack of clean water (infrastructure) in the district until the early 1990s, and story of accessing clean water thanks to the efforts of Kıyıklık and Erdoğan. The public access to clean water seems to be the distinguishing feature of the developmentalist discourse in Bağcılar. The Bağcılar Municipality at a time requested the dwellers to dig the water channels in front of their own doors on the streets to quicken the establishment of the water infrastructure in some neighborhoods. Thus, by self-help and collective ("*imece"*) work, the Bağcılar dwellers were able to access to water with low fees. By praising the municipal work and services of the AKP, the religious-conservative Kurdish poor make sense of their class-based experiences and political preferences in the city through the development of the district:

> I came from Malatya to Istanbul in 1991. I came here because of marriage. I was shocked when I came to Parseller neighborhood of Bağcılar, because

> previously I had only seen the clean environment of Fatih with my father. When I saw here, I was shocked. Every street corner was muddy and dirty. I said to my dad, 'I don't want to marry here. I want to go back with you.' You know, I was only 18 back then, I had supposed I would marry not my husband but Bağcılar [laughing]. In this period, there was no water in the houses. We got water with huge plastic containers from the central mosque and carried these containers back home. Besides, houses were much more crowded than they are today, so we got tired of carrying those containers again and again. That is the story of Bağcılar in 1991. I cannot understand how people cannot see the public services of the AK Party today.
>
> (Selma, 45, Malatya, housewife)

> I came to Istanbul in 1986. For the first two years, I worked in a shoemaking workshop in Gedikpaşa. I remember that, after we finished working with our hands really polished at the end of the day, we had to wash our hands with soda because there was no access to water. Maybe you may remember, Ergun Göknel was the head of ISKI [Istanbul Water and Sewerage Administration] at a time and he stole a huge amount of money from the institution. ISKI got bankrupt. We had no water. Once a week, the water tanker came to our neighborhood. Women ran after the water tanker with the plastic containers in their hands. Often a quarrel broke out among the women to get water in order. Even when the water came to the apartments, it would not go up from the basement to the top floors. People took a bath every 15 days. There were garbage mountains all around, dirty smells all over the city. Stinky smell of the Golden Horn came to Bağcılar. In the morning, the streets smelled like hell. The hygiene conditions were bad. We went through such difficult times. But, you see, now people walk through the clean streets of Bağcılar. Our water infrastructure is perfect. Our garbage is collected every day. People can have a picnic with their families on the banks of the Golden Horn. Istanbul is now in perfect condition. Today, Istanbul is the new Paris. During the Erdogan's metropolitan mayorship, Istanbul became the new Istanbul. But unfortunately, our people are so ungrateful, thus they cannot understand to the real value of the AK party's services.
>
> (Selim, 52, Malatya, manual worker)

The Kurdish migrants prefer to narrate their economic backgrounds and class stories along with the development story of Bağcılar from a village to a modern city with the RP's and AKP's local governments. In this way, the poor Kurdish voters often identify with the pro-Islamist governments through the discourse of developmentalism and the services-politics. The Kurdish informants supporting the AKP do emphasize not only local development but also underline the improvement of national welfare in general. While most Kurdish migrants could not take their

share from the neoliberal capitalism in past, they have reached economic and social opportunities with the AKP governments.

While explaining their political preferences, the poor religious-conservative Kurdish informants especially attract attention to the improvements in the field of social policies and healthcare system. In particular, the Kurdish poor address their easy access to the healthcare services today, which was hard to be imagined before the AKP governments. The contrasts between "the old Turkey" (the 1980s-1990s) and "the new Turkey" (2000s-2010s) become prominent in their narratives. To facilitate the discussion in the interviews, sometimes I commented that the AKP's provision of social policies is 'normal' for any democratic polity. Many Kurdish interviewees disagree with me.

> Then why the former statesmen and politicians did not do that *hocam*? Let us be honest. The previous governments did not do anything like that, so the services provided by the AK Party look outstanding. I understand what you mean. Maybe the AK party should do five times or ten times more in social services. But you should remember that the previous governments did nothing. That is why the AK Party's development and provision of services are very valuable. Let me give you an example, assume that I come to your restaurant every day to get a soup, but one day I stop by Vedat's restaurant [who is another informant in the room] and he serves me the chicken meal. So why do I have to prefer your restaurant? I do not. If the previous governments did any public services, you might be right. But they did not. Even they tried to stop who were eager to work for the public benefit. In the 1990s, there was a water problem, there were piles of garbage everywhere, the citizens had to wait long hours in queues in hospitals and the state offices. And even if you had money, you were facing serious limitations. For example, a wealthy Kurdish citizen living in the southeast in the 1990s could not buy the things he wanted because of the OHAL rule. Come on *hocam*, let us be frank, we experienced lots of difficulties in Istanbul before the AK party governments. For example, the sellers used to stock cigarettes, fuel, oil, and all sorts of items just before the New Year's Eve with the expectation of price increases [inflation] in the 1980s and 1990s. It was not necessary for the governments to declare official price increases; the prices automatically went up at the eve of the new year. In every school opening period in September, the poor families got anxious about how to deal with the costs of new books and new school uniforms for their children. When we became sick, the problems were waiting for us in hospitals. It was hard to find an appointment from a doctor, and we needed to wait in long queues in public hospitals. It was hard to find

> the medicine that is written in the prescriptions. We have witnessed such difficulties; we have experienced such difficulties ourselves.
> (Gazi, 55, Diyarbakır, butcher shop owner)

It is interesting to recognize that some middle-class members of the party are aware of the fact that the social policies are used as an "electoral investment" by the party. Some AKP officials whom I interviewed prefer to present the social policies not as "citizenship rights" but as specific "investments". The use of business-based "investment" terminology by the AKP officials for describing the social policies is in fact in line with the neoliberal-capitalist ethos widespread in the party circles. In the interviews, these party officials seem very happy to introduce the party's "social project investments" as follows:

> Our party made huge *investments* in the eastern and southeastern regions in the last 15 years, such as airports and hospitals. Through these investments, employment opportunities are provided to the local people [i.e. Kurds]. In the past, there were only a few hospitals in the region, but today there are numerous hospitals with hundreds of beds in each city. Almost in all cities of the region, a public university was established by the AK Party. Thus, with the educated and qualified young people, the welfare level in the region increased. If there is a university in Hakkari, if there is a hospital in Yüksekova, then the local people would be employed. Nonetheless, there are people in the region who make use of all opportunities of the government but never vote for the party. They use the roads that the party paved with asphalt. Our party does not make these projects for its supporters but for all citizens; we never discriminate people in our services. [italics are used for emphasis]
> (Murat, 35, AKP official in Bağcılar)

> Feyzulah the President served as mayor for 4 terms in Bağcılar. Before that Bağcılar was covered with muddy streets. […] There are always *investments* for social projects in Bağcılar. Let us take the Palace of the Disabled People as an example. It is a *huge investment*. Today, the Palace's monthly expenses cost almost one and a half trillion TL. There is absolutely no discrimination, whether having Turkish or Kurdish origins, anyone with disabilities can benefit from the Palace. There are special training and activities in the Palace for all disabled people. It's a *super investment*. I wish such *investments* could be made by every municipality. If you have an opportunity, I recommend you visit the Palace. Everything was perfect. It is great to see disabled people get off their houses. Social workers take the disabled people from their homes, bring them to the Palace, communicate with them for hours and then in the evening they drive them back to their homes. [italics are used for emphasis]
> (Ekrem, 45, AKP's official in Bağcılar)

The business-related investment terminology used by the AKP officials signals the machine-type of politics envisioned by the party. The party appeals to the poor voters, including the Kurdish ones, by making "investments." As any entrepreneur would calculate the costs and profits of their business, the AKP representatives deliberately account for the inputs (investments in social policies) and outputs (consent and votes) of clientelism. At this point it is necessary to remember that, according to Küçük and Türkmen (2020), although the politics of service is the most significant sign of neoliberal corporate ideology of the AKP between 2002 and 2013, the regime faced with crisis in 2013 (the Gezi uprising) and 15 July 2016 (the failed coup attempt). Especially the latter became symbolic foundational moment for the new regime as Erdoğan was able to mobilize the masses around his own leader cult. "The ideological and affective void is being substituted by the sense of devotion to the leader" (Küçük & Türkmen, 2020, p. 15) It is possible to say that after 2015 there is a discursive shift in the AKP strategy from "neoliberal servant-state to the seizure of the public sphere." Symbolic politics have gained further significance in this context.

5.3 Space-making

5.3.1 The Islamization of Bağcılar

A significant aspect of the establishment of clientelist-machine is spatial politics, because clientelist-machines often operate in the capitalist urban space. For the establishment and reproduction of clientelist-machine, the AKP requires a spatial regime that supports its very existence and ideology. It is possible to argue that there is correlation between Islamization ("*İslamileşme"*) of space and the AKP's electoral success in Bağcılar. However, even though it is easy to discern the correlation

between these two factors, it is hard to specify the direction of causality: whether the earlier Islamization experience brings success to the AKP in Bağcılar, or the AKP facilitates the Islamization of Bağcılar. There is empirical support for both propositions: on the one hand, there is recognizable organization *Naqshibendi* orders in Bağcılar since the 1980s according to the locals, on the other hand, the political Islamists' organization (primarily the *Milli Görüş* movement) in the district goes back to the late 1980s, as the RP became successful in the first municipal election in 1992 and Islamists has never lost election until now. In this section, for constructing a comprehensible model, I will only focus on the first proposition and discuss the influence of Islamist space-making on the AKP's successful mobilization among the Kurdish electorate in the district.

Some commentators argue that Islamic communities and tariqats constitute the main grassroots institutional basis to garner Kurdish support for the AKP (Günay, 2019; Günay & Yörük, 2019). In other words, the Islamic community and tariqat networks make the functioning of local political machines of the AKP possible. Through the solidarity networks and the moral value systems constructed by the Islamic groups, significant segments of religious-conservative Kurdish poor support the AKP (Yörük & Üstündağ, 2014). It is necessary to remark that Islamic communities and tariqats support the AKP to obtain a safe political environment to maintain their organization. Therefore, the leading members of the Islamic communities and tariqats exclusively support the party for the interests of their communities. In turn, the AKP provides opportunity spaces for these groups to organize; allocate them buildings and lands in urban areas, and provide them financial resources.[139] Compared to other wealthy-secular quarters of Istanbul,

[139] In Turkey, AKP provides organizational space for some Islamic groups in propagating pro-Islamic ideology. In return, AKP exploits these Islamic communities and spaces in constructing consent to its

Islamic communities and tariqats especially intensify their activities in the peripheral districts, where the poor religious-conservative Kurdish groups are concentrated. It is probably because they are able to establish their own institutions and foundations in an easy way and find large numbers of supporters in these districts.

Islamic communities and tariqats have crafted their own spaces for producing a sense of belonging and economic solidarity in Bağcılar. By creating autonomous space at the neighborhood level, Islamic communities and tariqats are able to maintain a compact organization among the poor religious-conservative Kurds. The AKP's Bağcılar Municipality, together with the governorship, allows the organization of Islamic groups, and sometimes promote their activities for managing criminality, constructing traditional-Islamic models of motherhood and womanhood, producing docile bodies and disciplinary matrix over the space. The municipality does not hesitate to put banners and posters of the activities of the Islamic actors to highly visible public places, such as the Bağcılar's main square (see Appendix I). In the interviews, some AKP told that they indeed appreciate the activities of those Islamic actors in Bağcılar, because they believe those groups serve not only for their community but also for the general well-being of the country. Hence, there are frequent interactions with the AKP officials/brokers and the community-and-tariqat members at the neighborhood level.

In a focus group interview, Hatice, a Kurdish textile worker and an HDP supporter, attracted attention to the recently established *Sıbyan Mektep*s (the Islamic children's schools) in the district.[140] Hatice's two little cousins (6 and 8 years old)

hegemony. Sometimes, the Islamic communities oblige voting for AKP. On the organization and capacity of Islamic communities in Turkey, see Çakır (1990, 2014), Atay (2017), Öztürk (2019)

[140] Sıbyan Mekteps are quite new phenomenon in Turkey. Unfortunately, despite their high number and increasing visibility, there is no study on the subject. The study of the Sıbyan Mekteps, which wait the future researchers, could be illuminating to understand to extent of everyday Islamization.

began to attend the Quran courses of the *Sıbyan* school belonging to a notorious Islamic community.[141] Hatice said she feels sorry for these little children because they are exposed to crude Islamist indoctrination. The *Sıbyan Mektep* means primary school attached to neighborhood mosque in the Ottoman period and clearly reflects the mainstream educational vision of the Islamist actors in Turkey (Kara & Birinci, 2005). The *Sıbyan* schools, which are affiliated with and financed by the Islamic communities, have recently become very popular in the poor urban peripheries like Bağcılar and attracted the working-class children. It is especially attractive for working-poor families who cannot send their children to kindergarten or summer schools because of their lack of financial resources. These schools are open to everyone and almost free of charge. In these schools, working-class children play games in safe zones, are offered free foods and drinks, are taught the basics of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. Considering the extent of commodification of social services and the state's withdrawal from universal childcare, these schools provide a haven to the religious conservative Kurdish working-class families as well. Through such social services of the Islamic communities and tariqats, the AKP increase its chances among the Kurdish working-class in Bağcılar.

It is possible to argue that the space-making activities of the Islamic communities and tariqats are highly organized and visible in specific neighborhoods and streets of the district. The narrative below shows the extent of Islamization process in a neighborhood of Bağcılar:

> I live in the Yüzyıl neighborhood and I know it very well. In our neighborhood, the Islamic communities and conservative segments are very powerful. This is reflected in elections and in the local economy. Let me give you an example: I don't know how exactly accurate this information is, but it seems very plausible to me. During one of our gatherings ("*dini sohbet*"), one of our big *brothers* [from the Islamic community] said that in Yüzyıl the

[141] There is an allegation of sexual assault in this Sıbyan School in Bağcılar, see Kırcı (2019).

> ladies have stopped shopping from those groceries and stores who don't go to the Friday prayers. I have tried to observe this change for a few months, and I have noticed that almost all groceries and stores are actually closed down during the Friday prayer. Thank God, there are those signboards on their doors telling, 'We're on the Friday prayer, we'll come soon.' It is not common in the past but becomes very pervasive today. I believe it is because ladies have organized among themselves in a secret way to boycott those who are not praying at all. What can a shopkeeper do in this situation? He must have a real trouble. He had no option but to go to the Friday prayer. I hope all conservative ladies would have participated in this campaign. Alhamdulillah, there is a good Islamization process in our Yüzyıl neighborhood.
>
> (Ahmet, 40, Siirt, a *tariqat* member, manual worker)

In the interviews, many AKP officials and voters support the idea of Islamization of Bağcılar. It is possible to say that the Islamist space-making provides an opportunity for the AKP to organize easily among the poor conservative electorate. Recognizing the fact that most Islamic communities and tariqats support the AKP with the hope of maintaining their organization at the local level, the newly recruited members of those groups are also expected to support the AKP. Therefore, the political machine of the AKP gained further ground with Islamization.

While the Islamic actors construct their own spaces by concentrating in specific neighborhoods and streets in the district, the non-Islamist dwellers have to comply with the dominant Islamic norms of these places. In this regard, Islamist space-making involves both inclusionary (solidarity-based) and exclusionary (discrimination-based) dimensions, as it is seen in the narrative above. Due to the exclusionary dimension, some upwardly-mobile (relatively better-off) Kurdish segments, especially those with secular orientations, have begun to leave Bağcılar in the face of recent Islamization process and move to heterogeneous and more secular districts and neighborhoods, such as Bahçelievler, Şirinevler, and Başakşehir. Hatice, the Kurdish worker mentioned above, claims that there are Kurdish families among those moving groups who want their children to be better-educated and not to be exposed to the Islamic communities.

In some cases, it is quite interesting to see that the Islamic community and tariqat networks overlap with the tribal-kinship networks in the district. It is probably because the tariqat posts (influential positions), especially among the Naqshbandi orders, have been transferred within the same tribal lineage. The Shaikh's son inherits the post of his father. The following narrative shows this overlapping pattern:

> We have an association centrally located in Esenler [a district next to Bağcılar], the president of this association is our tribal leader from Siirt ["*aşiret lideri*"]. Our tribe is exceptionally large. There are mosques in many cities belonging to us. I know those mosques located in Siirt, Bitlis, Diyarbakir, and Kars. We have strong community bonds among the pious Siirt people here in Bağcılar. In the past, our leader served as our *imam* for a long time, he was both our tribal leader and our main *imam* back in the village. His Islamic knowledge is still exceptionally good. He is considered as a great traditional *mele*. During his imamate years, he has never accepted money or gifts. You know, the Hanafites take money for imamate, but Shaafis do not take money for such religious duties.
>
> (Mehmet, Siirt, 30, the AKP voter)

The narrator, Mehmet, works in an Islamist publishing house in Fatih related with another famous tariqat. Mehmet's affiliation with the religious Kurdish tribe he belongs to and the tariqat he works for have provided him deep knowledge about the Islamist space-making activities in Istanbul's peripheral districts. Mehmet said that the pious Kurds hang around in the Islamist cafes and coffeehouses, where it is forbidden to play cards and "okey" because these are considered as *haram* according to mainstream Sunni interpretation. He stated that the pious Kurds he knows only play halal games, mainly chess and checkers. Mehmet told that, in the times of prayers, the pious Kurds in these coffeehouses take a break, go to their own mosques to perform salah together. In line with this trend, another Kurdish informant showed me the numerous Islamist coffeehouses in Bagcilar's Fevzi Çakmak and Fatih neighborhoods, where dominantly the pious Kurds hang around and socialize with their colocals. Kurdish fellows in those pro-Islamic leisure spaces mostly know each

other very well because they are often from the same village or kinship lineage, and therefore the outsiders are not very welcomed and met with suspicion.

Mehmet told that, in his neighborhood, the tribal fellows together with the support of other Islamic communities waged a war against the drug-dealers and have to large extent become successful in ceasing drug trafficking among the Kurdish youth. He stated that both the tribal and Islamic community-tariqat networks are very effective in recovering the "Kurdish street children" who used drugs and involved in criminal activities ("*sokakbaşı*" or "*ayak takımı*"). Those Islamic groups provide Islamic brotherhood and solidarity for the poor Kurdish youth with deviant behavior at the local level. Mehmet said, "most of the young Kurdish vagabonds find the true path" owing to the efforts of those Islamic groups. He commented that, "I hope those recovered youth become vehicles for our salvation in the Day of Rising." He explained his motivation for "emancipating" the drug-addicted Kurdish youth with reference to the Islamic principle of *tebliğ* – which basically mean "showing the true path" to the nonbelievers. In this context, it is especially necessary to mention the efforts of Menzil community (the largest Naqshbandi community in Turkey with a tribal basis in Adıyaman – see the next section) in the mobilization of the young unemployed Kurds – i.e. the lumpenproletariat in Marxist terminology.

The pro-AKP Kurdish informants narrate the most typical mobilization strategy of the Menzilists in the district as follows: They gather the young Kurdish lumpen proletariat in the deprived neighborhoods, specifically recruiting the young men who are drug addicts and vagabonds spending all their time on the streets. They take these young men from Bağcılar and bring them to the *dergâh* (i.e. the dervish lodge) in Menzil, where they promise to give up their old bad habits, repent of their sins ("*tövbe almak*") and seek the true path ("*hidayete ermek*"). For a while, maybe

two to three months, these young men work as free laborers in the farms of the tariqat leader. In the meantime, they get religious education –including essential prayers and *suras*– and they learn how to perform the latent *dhikr* that is peculiar to the Menzil community. A few months later, these young men return to Bağcılar, seek halal ways of subsistence, and some of them wander around the streets wearing long-sleeved cloaks ("*cübbe*") and turbans ("*sarık*") to practice Prophet's Sunnah. With their Islamist appearances, they are organic parts of everyday life in Bağcılar.

While the Islamic communities and tariqats attempt to recruit ("emancipate" in their own words) new members among the young Kurdish lumpenproletariat through such disciplinary techniques, some other Sunni groups opt for stigmatizing and marginalizing those people. The criminalization of young Kurdish lumpenproletariat and their stigmatization as "street gangs" ("*sokakbaşı tayfa*") are indeed common among the Turkish religious conservatives. During the fieldwork, I noticed that the Kurdish "street gangs" are a very well-known phenomenon among all Bağcılar dwellers. The informants told that those "street gangs" spend most of their time hanging around the streets, because they do not have regular jobs, and even worse, any hopes and expectations from the future. In general, they are stigmatized with violence and drug use, criminalized by the local police, and marginalized or excluded by the general public. Yonucu (2013) explains the spatial stigmatization of the poor youth in the Kurdish-Alevite neighborhoods as follows:

> When I was doing my research, a young [Kurdish-Alevite] man said, 'There are three possibilities for the young people in our neighborhood: Either you'll study at the university and you'll leave this neighborhood – which becomes very difficult possibility now – or you'll become a vigilante, or if you want to stay clean, you'll listen to the voice of your conscience and become a revolutionary.' Then he said that there are three ways in front of the one who opted for being a revolutionary: 'Either you'll go to prison or you'll flee abroad or you'll give up revolution and become depressed' (p. 33)

In the peripheries of Istanbul, and specifically in the deprived neighborhoods of Bağcılar, the encounters of both the (pro-AKP) religious-conservative groups and (pro-HDP) leftist groups with the "Kurdish street gangs" are inevitable. The religious-conservative Kurds in the district believed it is the PKK that spreads the use of bonsai (and other drugs) among those Kurdish youths to "deteriorate their morals." In the eyes of the Kurdish religious-conservative families, being a drug addict and being a PKK member are almost equivalent. The encounters of the Kurdish religious-conservatives with "the street gangs" sometimes involve conflict and violence. Following the footsteps of Darıcı (2009), who studies the contentious politics of the Kurdish youth in metropolitan areas, it is possible to maintain that violence is the constitutive element of space not only in Bağcılar but in all urban peripheries where Kurds settle and live in the last decades.

Recep, a young Kurdish supporter of the AKP and a member of an Islamic community, pointed out to his violent encounters with the street gangs: He cited the two street gangs in Fezvzi Çakmak neighborhood where he and his family used to live: The Kurdish gang of Tatvan (Bitlis) and the Turkish-Shiite gang of Iğdır. While the former occupies the central streets, the latter is located on the streets surrounding the Caferi mosque in the neighborhood. Recep stated that, even though he attempted to distance himself from the gang members and their activities, he got seriously beaten by both Turkish and Kurdish street gangs. Although the Kurdish gang members knew that Recep was ethnically Kurdish, they continued to harass him. They even abused and scolded his friends who visited him. Recep suggested that with the AKP's security measures these violent groups were, to a large extent, "passivized." Recep expresses his deep sympathy towards the AKP just because of the increased security measures in the previously dangerous zones of Bağcılar.

The religious-conservative Kurds underline that it was impossible for them to stay out of trouble and abstain from quarrels in Bağcılar in the past. Some of them particularly state that they were exposed to violent incidents such as robbery, burglary, racketeering, physical and sexual harassment in the past. According to the religious-conservative Kurds, with the AKP governments' policies aiming "public order and safety", which are in fact disciplinary spatial practices in Foucaldian sense, Bağcılar has turned into "a safe and secure modern city." Many religious-conservative Kurdish interviewees underline that public places of Bağcılar have been cleared of crime and drugs during the AKP period, thus they can now spend a comfortable time with their families in parks, gardens, and recreational areas. It is possible to argue that policing and disciplining of the urban-space vis-à-vis the Islamization of neighborhoods channel some religious-conservative Kurdish voters towards the AKP. In other words, the AKP's disciplinary spatial measures along with the practices of Islamic groups are to some extent effective on religious-conservative Kurdish electorate in the district.

Although most Islamic communities and tariqats have open organizations with their public associations and schools, some are still very isolated and difficult to access. During my fieldwork, wandering around the deep streets of Bağcılar, I noticed the sound of *dhikr* ceremonies rising from the basements of apartment buildings. An executive of the HDP Bağcılar describes the covert organization of some tariqats as follows:

> There are lots of tariqats and sects in Bağcılar, which work in general for the AKP. I know there are several radical groups. For example, the Istanbul center of ISIS is indeed located in Bagcilar. Just look at the basement floors, you might easily notice those secret masjids, where most of the *imam*s belong to *tariqat*s. I know that some of those *imam*s are Menzilists and support the AKP. Those disciples wearing turban and long-sleeve cloaks regularly visit those basement-floor-masjids. I live in Fevzi Çakmak, and I know three of those masjids in my neighborhood. For instance, I know the *imam* of Zeynel

> Abidin Masjid in person, he is Kurdish of Siirt origin and he is a disciple of a *tariqat* based in Fatih Çarşamba. I guess all those notorious *tariqat*s have their own masjids in Bağcılar and I am afraid most of the attendants of those masjids are indeed Kurdish. Like our [pro-HDP] masjids, they used to go to their own masjids, not that of the Diyanet.
>
> (Vedat, 55, Bitlis, the HDP executive)

After all, it is possible to argue that the Islamist space-making provides a basis for the establishment of the AKP's local machine. In other words, the AKP's clientelist-machine politics gain ground and probably works easily in such an Islamist setting. The AKP promotes the activities of Islamic communities and tariqats in Bağcılar as much as these activities increase its chances of re-election.

5.3.2 Dominant Islamic communities and tariqats in Bağcılar

In this section, I will directly discuss the most effective Islamic communities and tariqats in Bağcılar. It is a well-known fact that there has always been a strong relationship between Naqshbandi orders and pro-Islamist political parties in Turkey (Yavuz, 2005). Some of the eminent AKP members attended Mehmet Zahit Kotku's –the famous leader of the İskenderpaşa community– Islamic seminars in the past. "Many of the major figures of the Welfare Party came out of the İskenderpaşa community when it was a famous center of the Naqshbandi order. Among them, Necmettin Erbakan and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan both participated in Kotku's lessons." (Aviv 2018, 282). In general, the organic links between the Islamic communities-tariqats and the AKP are disclosed by many studies (Turam, 2006; Aviv, 2018; Çakır, 1990, 2014; Atay, 2017; Öztürk, 2019). Although in most cases these organic links led to cooperation between the actors, sometimes they transformed into conflict and confrontation because of the issue of sharing power – as it is seen in the Gülenist case in the 2010s. With the financial support and special favors of the AKP governments towards the Islamic communities and tariqats, these actors have become

highly visible 2000s and 2010s. Those Islamic actors have especially dominated the working-class quarters of Istanbul in the AKP era, and likewise they have become dominant in Bağcılar.[142] It is almost impossible to count the number of Islamic associations and foundations in the district. Islamic institutions owned by the communities-tariqats have mushroomed in every corner of the district.

Through my interviews and participant observations, I realized that the most influential group in Bağcılar was that of the Gülen community prior to their coup attempt in 2016. The Gülenists' activities among the Kurdish population peaked in the 2000s with the direct support of the AKP to the community. The Gülen community and the AKP has been close partners in dealing with the Kurdish unrest and criminalizing the Kurdish movement. Fethullah Gülen and his community became the main representative of the Turkish-nationalist-Islam synthesis after the 1980s coup (Aktan 2015). Instead of intimidating the Kurdish people with the support of Hizbullah, the state opted for showing the "humanitarian face of Islam" to Kurdish citizens with the Gülen community (Aktan, 2015). In the 2000s, the government overtly provided substantial resources to the Gülenists, as they turned into the main practitioners of the Kurdish assimilation project on the ground with their schools and dormitories. The Gülenists easily reached the poor religious-conservative Kurds owing to their provision of high-quality education for free or at very low fees. As the Turkish state avoided (or failed) to establish the student dormitories as a formal social policy presumably for providing opportunity space for the Islamic communities, the Gülenists exploited this opportunity and developed

[142] For the Sanayi neighborhood in Kağıthane, Doğan argues that "those Islamic actors, which used to be hidden and inward-looking in past, function through associations and foundations today. Their activities are very diverse: Quran courses, special training of Quran students (hafız), social assistance, free courses for the university entrance exam, 'women-only' programs, seminar on the life stories of Islamic scholars, etc." 64

informal social assistance to thousands of students by providing them free accommodation and considerable amount of scholarship. The Kurdish activist (HDP) interviewees underline that they struggled very hard to "emancipate" the Kurdish university students from the Gülenist dormitories and "the lighthouses" ("*Işık evleri*") in Bağcılar. They stated that the Gülenist networks had been very influential among the poor Kurdish youth both in the in the western metropolises and the Kurdish populated eastern and southeastern provinces. Some activists told that the Gülenist community with the help of police forces marginalized and criminalized the supporters of the Kurdish movement in poor neighborhoods in the 2000s. Nevertheless, after their coup attempt, the Gülenist organization was totally crushed.

In addition to the once-dominant Gülenists, my interviewees asserted that the Menzil community, which is considered to the most crowded Naqshbandi group in Turkey, is the most influential Islamic actor today in Bagcilar. This is in line with community-tariqat demographics in Turkey. In 2018, it is estimated that the total number of Islamic community and tariqat members is at least 2.6 million people (Öğreten, 2019). According to 2011 figures, it is estimated that the Menzil community has more than 700,000 followers in Turkey (Seatov, 2018). In terms of their political-economic capacity, Menzilists is the most significant "Islamist interest group" (Terkoğlu, 2019; Öztürk, 2019).[143] Unlike other Naqshbandi communities, the Menzilists pays special attention to the poor Kurdish youth and informal proletariat. Especially in recent years, the community has become quite popular among the poor with deviant behaviors in urban peripheries, it is believed that "alcoholics, gamblers, and criminals" visited Menzil village in Adıyaman and "were

[143] There are organic ties between the AKP and the Menzilists. It is claimed that the governing party especially allow the organization of this tariqat in the Ministry of Health. After the coup attempt, the Gülenists have been totally crushed and eliminated from the bureaucracy. It is believed that the Menzilists would fill this gap in the bureaucracy (Öztürk, 2019)

often cured of their addictions" (Saetov, 2018, p. 59). The geographical origin of the Menzil community in the Kurdish-dominant city (Adıyaman) becomes critical in the organization of the Menzilists among the Kurdish poor. My pro-AKP Kurdish informants confirmed that the Menzilists clearly support the AKP in Bağcılar – as they do at the national level. As a matter of fact, some AKP brokers in the district do not hide their affiliation with the local leaders of the Menzil community.

Apart from the Menzilists, other pro-AKP communities-tariqats that are mentioned by the Kurdish informants in Bağcılar are İsmailağa (Cübbeli group), Haznevis, Kadiris, Meşveret and some branches of the *Risale-i Nur*. There are everyday interactions between the community members and the party brokers at the local level. Sometimes the community members themselves act as the party brokers. The Islamic solidarity-brotherhood provided by these communities seem to be effective on the pious Kurds. Most of these communities have their own masjids, Quran courses, seminar rooms, student dorms, and houses and summer schools in Bağcılar. By filling the vacuum left by the state in the field of social welfare, the Islamic communities easily organize among the Kurdish poor by meeting their everyday needs and providing informal social services, especially considering education. The AKP's authorities especially allow their organization in the field of religious education.

Nevertheless, there is not a uniform relationship between the Islamic communities-tariqats and the AKP. As a result of the political tensions and conflicting interests among the Islamist sector after the Gülenist coup attempt in 2016, some Islamic communities have begun to cautiously support the party or refrained from politics. In addition, with the rising public suspicion against all Islamic actors after the coup attempt, some groups have become more and more

isolated. Hamit, an official member of the AKP in Bağcılar, who is ex-member of the Sülaymanist (*Süleymancılar*) community, severely criticized his circle for not supporting AKP in the last election. Hamit underlined that he had financially supported the Quran courses of the Süleymanist community for many years, as he used to believe the Süleymanists serve best for Islam compared to other communities. However, he got disappointed in Süleymanists after the last election because they supported not the AKP but the Akşener's İyi Party. Hamit told that he distanced himself not only from Süleymanists but from all communities and devoted himself and all his free time to the party activities. The narrative of a Kurdish informant belonging to İsmailağa community in Bağcılar also reveals such tensions between the community and the party:

> *İK*: I do know that the Erenköy community openly declared their support for Erdoğan's AKP yesterday. What about your community, the İsmailağa?
>
> *Gazi*: No, our community did not explain its support. Everyone decides with his own free will in our community. Some of our *hoca*s say, 'OK, you can vote for whomever you want to, but also please care about the future of the country, the unity of the country. Please don't let anyone disturb our solidarity.' Until now, none of our *hoca*s come out and tell us which party to vote for. I admit the fact that Mahmut Efendi [the current tariqat leader] loves Erdoğan very much, and Erdogan sometimes visit our precious Mahmut Efendi and meet with Cübbeli Ahmet *hoca* [the second man of the tariqat]. Yet despite these visits and meetings, our *hoca*s have not said any word on elections so far. May Allah be my witness; I have not heard anything from them about politics and parties. As a matter of fact, they cannot take such responsibility ("*vebal*"). Because our *hoca*s know very well that some different things or conflicts may happen tomorrow. They cannot take the responsibility of the whole community in such a way.

Despite their reservations, it seems that most Kurdish members of Islamic communities and tariqats still support the AKP in Bağcılar. When I asked the Kurdish members of these communities and tariqats the reasons behind their support, they underlined their Islamic identification with Erdoğan. Some emphasized the fact that Erdoğan prays five times a day and there are pious deputies whom they know

well in the AKP. A Kurdish community member commented that "I knew Erdoğan did huge mistakes in the past, but he is still my Muslim brother. Putting these mistakes aside, I can die on behalf of him because he's a true believer." Despite some criticisms, it seems that Kurdish members of the communities and tariqats continue to support the AKP because of the Islamic prudence ("*maslahat gereği*) and the lesser evil ("*ehnevişer*") principles. The voters' strong religious identification with Erdoğan is a well-known strategy (Balta & Çelik, 2018).

5.4 Identity and cultural frames

5.4.1 The AKP's Islamist Ideology

AKP's Islamist articulation does not only address every aspect of Muslim life, but outrageously determine the contours everyday life and set limits to secular public space in Turkey. In the case of Kurdish voting, the party's Islamist identity emerge as a significant cleavage along with the class-based divisions. In other words, Islamic beliefs and practices are significant in the establishment of the AKP's hegemony over the poor Kurdish electorate. As a matter of fact, I showed that the religiosity cleavage supports the class-based cleavage among the Kurdish electorate.[144] As Auyero argues, in addition to material inducements (redistribution), clientelist politics create a symbolic universe (recognition) with the help of brokers among the urban poor. In the case of AKP's clientelism, Islamic-based solidarity and belonging become one of the main building blocks of the symbolic universe of the urban poor.

[144] In analyzing the Kurdish samples of Istanbul and Bağcılar drawn from the KONDA dataset, I find a negative correlation between religiosity and poverty parameters; an increase in the religiosity level decreases the income levels among the Kurdish voters. In addition, I also specify a negative correlation between religiosity and education parameters; an increase in the religiosity level decreases education levels among the Kurdish voters. From the previous chapters, we also know that Kurds with higher income and education are more likely to support the HDP, and Kurdish with lesser income and education are more likely to support the AKP. Reading these empirical findings together, it seems that religiosity decreases the probability of the HDP voting and upward class mobility among the Kurdish electorate.

Therefore, the AKP's Islamist articulations towards the Kurdish poor and working-class deserves special attention. In the current literature, many studies underline that AKP heavily employ religious discourses and frameworks in mobilizing the Kurdish electorate at the national level (Eligür, 2010; Çiçek, 2013, 2016; Grigoriadis & Dilek, 2017).[145] The party did not declare its Islamist agenda openly in its early phase; instead it preferred to present itself as the representative of the religious masses ("the silent majority") against the secular elites of the country (Alyanak, 2013). In my interviews in Bağcılar, many pious Kurdish informants explain their votes for the AKP through the religiosity factor. [146]

> I voted for the ANAP [in the 1980s] and then Refah Party in the 1990s. I supported Erbakan *hoca* for a long time. Most of the AK party politicians were the students of *hoca*. When *hoca* got tired, I decided to vote for the AK Party […] Let me tell you my brother, in order to support for a party or a politician, first I need to embrace their views and opinions, then I look at their practices. Before the AK Party came out, when Erdoğan was the mayor of Istanbul, he promised that if they came to the power, he would lighten up the lives of Muslims. He promised that the AK party would remove all the barriers in front of Muslims in Turkey. Then they started to remove those barriers one by one, slowly. You can ask any Muslim supporting the AK Party, he would tell you that he needs this to live and practice his religion comfortably. In order to live comfortably as a Muslim in this country, we need to support the AK Party and Erdoğan (Gazi).

It is necessary to underline that, today, the AKP's Islamist identity has been constructed on "the resentment of the poor" in relation to the historical divide between the poor-periphery and the elite-center in Turkey (Yılmaz 2018). The rural-to-urban migrants in Turkey have become the target of the rightist-Islamist parties

[145] Çiçek argues that the Kurdish Sunni-Muslimism has recently been consolidated under the framework of the AKP's pro-Islamist social imaginary. Çiçek specifies three different social imaginaries among the Kurdish population in Turkey: pro-Islamist social imaginary is represented by the AKP, pro-Kurdish social imaginary represented is by the Kurdish movement in general, and lastly the Alevi social imaginary is represented by the CHP. Furthermore, Çiçek indicates three different political-economic blocks in terms of both identity and interest among the Kurdish population: Kurdish national block represented by the HDP, Kurdish religious block represented by the AKP, and Kurdish economic elites with the neoliberal orientations.

[146] Nonetheless, in the second half of the 2010s, the party clearly this strategy and began to declare its Islamist agenda in public. In this context, Erdoğan's call for "bringing up religious generation" in 2016 became emblemetic of the party's Islamist agenda (Yılmaz 2016)

since the 1950s because of their religious identity, traditional-conservative habitus and severe poverty conditions. Prior to the emergence of Islamist movements, the rightist DP governments, which was mainly known for its patronage relations with the agrarian elites/bourgeoise, also used the clientelistic appeals to persuade the poor migrant workers, which were the necessary labor force for the rapidly developing industrial production. Instead of developing a sound social policy, the rightist governments allowed the informal settlement (*gecekondu*) of poor migrant workers and became popular among them. Regarding the fact that the migrant workers overwhelmingly continued their religious lifestyles, the rightist parties gained ground among them through Sunni-Islamic references in the *gecekondu* areas. Although the leftist movements became popular for a short time in *gecekondu* neighborhoods in the 1970s, the tacit agreement between the migrant workers and the rightist governments was to large extent maintained. Similarly, from the 1990s onwards, the urban poverty of Kurdish migrants provided an opportunity space and structural basis for the Islamist mobilization in Turkey. Ayata (1996) contends that

> regardless of social-class differences, the migrant Kurds in big cities tend to vote heavily for the RP [the main pro-Islamist party in the 1990s]. Thus, RP support in metropolitan areas is overwhelmingly peripheral and provincial, in the sense that it rests on a politically active 'secondary elite,' highly effective in mobilizing the urban, lower-middle and lower-income groups, and Kurds (p. 54).

The pro-Islamist RP was able to attract the poor migrants with its promises on Islamic-based redistributive social justice. "These promises, which articulated an acceptance of open markets with communitarian socialism, brought with them immense urban poor support" (De Leon et al., 2009, p. 208) The poor Kurdish migrants have been mobilized by the Islamist ideology of first the RP and then the AKP, as both political parties came to power with a strong articulation of economic justice. Therefore, from the 1990s onwards, "pious Kurds and informal workers (two

partially overlapping populations) began to desert the center-left and join the Islamists" (De Leon et al., 2009, p. 213). In this period, the Islamist actors mobilized the growing grievances among the poor, who were dislocated and disembedded by neoliberal global capitalism, "by promising to herald in an era of justice, equality and welfare (Günay & Yörük 2019, p. 11). Therefore, Islamism "has replaced socialism as the new emancipatory ideology of the oppressed, working classes, and the poor." (Günay & Yörük, 2019, p. 12). Along this line, until the second half of the 2010s, the AKP has committed to empower Islamist ideology and made use of *ummah* discourse to actualize the Islamic-based solidarity with the Kurdish people and to resolve the Kurdish issue.[147] In other words, the AKP has resorted to "the Muslim nationalism" instead of the Turkish nationalism in handling the Kurdish issue (White, 2014).

In many interviews, the pious Kurdish voters stated that the religious-conservative segments freely express their views and perform their religious practices thanks to the AKP governments in the last two decades. They often believe that the Muslims in Turkey get their dignity and reputation back with the AKP regime. They often see the party as the guarantor of their religiosity; According to these interviewees, in Turkey's imagined political geography (marked by the right vs. left, secularism vs. Islam cleavages), AKP is still the only party that can make "a decent Muslim life" possible. It is a well-known fact that the AKP maintains the old-fashioned secular-center vs. religious-periphery cleavage alive and reproduce anti-secular anti-elitist rhetoric to consolidate the religious-conservative electorate under the roof of the party and to justify the normalcy of its twenty-years long incumbency

[147] In 2015, the AKP Istanbul chairman Temurci stated that "the brotherhood of the Turks and Kurds does not depend upon elections, it is indeed based on the ummah and Islamic belief" (Milliyet, 2015).

(White, 2014). It is possible to say that the success of the AKP's local political machine depends on the use of Islamic frames at the local level.

Kurdish electorate of the AKP are quite pious not only individually (or personally) but also as family and community. The primary reason behind their religiosity is the Islamic views and practices they have inherited from the previous generations. That is to say, the pious Kurds have learned basic Islamic knowledge and culture to a large extent from their own families – not through schools or readings. Most of the pious Kurds claimed that they pray five times a day, they do not miss the Friday prayers and they read the Qur'an regularly – especially in the holy days and nights ("*kandil geceleri*"). However, although Islamic norms exclusively designate their everyday lives, only a few of them stated that they continue to read Islamic books. Therefore, one may define their religiosity as "the traditional Islam," which depends upon the transfer of Islamic knowledge (from the parents to children).[148] Nonetheless, we need to state that there are some Islamist Kurds among the AKP supporters whom I interviewed stating that they try to "keep their Islamic consciousness awake" by regularly attending the sermons and talks of famous Islamic community leaders (usually with Naqshbandi origins) and making readings on the secondary literature. This latter group can be labeled as the "*tarikat ehli*" (the tariqat member) in Turkish.

During my fieldwork, I noticed that Kurdish voters of the AKP in Bağcılar explain their religious-based voting almost always in reference to the deep-seated political antagonisms. It is not surprising to see that, in general, the AKP's religious-conservative Kurdish voters mostly position themselves against the CHP's "assertive

[148] Traditional Islam denote the beliefs and practices based on the previous generations. In contrast, modern Islam depends on the conscious reading of primary-and-secondary resources. In Turkey, the headscarf struggle in the 1980s and 1990s represented the modern Islamic understanding (Göle 1996).

secularism" (Kuru 2012). Even the moderately pious Kurds in the district, who defend ascetic beliefs and Sufism, stated that they were not comfortable with the secularist articulations of the *ancien régime*. The pious Kurdish voters refer to "the never-ending holy victimization" of Muslims in their positioning against the assertive secularism of the 1990s (Açıkel, 1996). Especially many "Islamist" Kurds openly refer to the influence of "the postmodern coup," which was directed against the Islamist government of RP on 28 February 1997. In a similar vein, a minor group of "radical Islamist" Kurds supporting the party harshly criticize the secular state and openly oppose all forms of secular policies – such as mixed-gender education. The religious-conservative segments supporting the AKP after all believe that they would have been marginalized and could not live their faith comfortably if the CHP or any other leftist party won the elections. There are lots of references to "old Turkey" and its secularist policies in the narratives of the religious-conservative Kurdish voters.

Nonetheless, it is necessary to remark that religious-conservative Kurdish voters do not only construct their political identity against the CHP's assertive secularism, but almost all of them criticize the HDP's "atheism", "anti-religiosity" and "Islamophobia." Most pro-AKP Kurdish voters believe that the HDP represents the PKK tradition that connotes not only "terrorism" but also "leftism" and "communism." The narrative of Gazi reveals this pattern:

> *İK:* I understand why you are supporting the AK party, but can you please tell me why you don't feel any sympathy or affection towards the HDP despite your Kurdish origin?
>
> *Gazi*: First, there are things that contradict my [Islamic] beliefs in the HDP, there are some [atheist] people who contradict my beliefs among them, I cannot vote for them. How they contradict, now let me explain, my beloved brother. In the last election campaign, maybe you will remember, the HDP said that they would remove the Diyanet as soon as possible if they win the elections. You see, they are totally against my religion. Secondly, they brought [atheist] candidates who did not dare to mention the word of Allah in

> front of us. We know them very well. Then they asked us to vote these candidates. They gave me a negative impression.
>
> *İK:* Maybe what bothers you is the fact that the HDP is indeed a leftist party.
>
> *Gazi:* It is not a problem of being a leftist. If they are leftist, at least, I will try to understand it. But there are all those different people among them – leftists, rightists, revolutionaries, atheists, Armenians, Jews. All those different people are in the same boat. Okay, it may be nice to have them all, but there must be a clear direction. There must be some ground rules. Do you know what mistake they made in the first place in the past? OK, I understand that the BDP or HDP get votes in Istanbul, İzmir and so on, but its real electorate reside in the east and southeast Turkey. Then they had to do the following: they would have taken the Holy Quran in their hands, then they would tell us, "my brothers, come with us on the path of the Qur'an, come with us in the name of Allah." If they had done this in the past, everything would have been quite different today, we might live in very different conditions today. I am sure that the people of the region, the people in the southeast, would just agree with my opinion. If I am going to die for this religion, I will die immediately, I will struggle and die without thinking a second. But when you come in front of us for something else, I cannot be with you my brother, because my only guide is the Quran.

The Islamist Kurds' discomfort with the anti-Islamic articulations of the Kurdish movement and its party is also confirmed by the Kurdish activists of the HDP in Bağcılar. The Kurdish activists remarked that their party had difficulties in mobilizing poor religious-conservative Kurdish voters because of the Marxist-leftist past of the movement (Çiçek, 2016; Romano, 2006, p. 142). Although most Kurdish activists with secular attitudes often downgrade the role of religion, some of them nonetheless acknowledge that the AKP successfully mobilize the Kurdish electorate through religious values. They call this "the religion-based brokerage" ("*din simsarlığı*") and use this term in a pejorative sense. Some Kurdish activists stated that their own pious relatives hesitate over the representation of the leftists, non-Muslims and feminists within the HDP. They pointed to the contradictory position of Kurdish religious-conservatives towards their party and stressed the inherent tensions between the Kurdish national and religious identities.

> In any case, this [Kurdish] movement is a leftist movement, and there is such a widespread idea that being leftist is bad thing in [religious] people's minds. For example, if you say I am a socialist or communist, these people automatically consider you as an atheist, a Godless ("*Allahsız*, *kitapsız*"). You know, this way of thinking is very prevalent among our people. As long as they [the AKP] say, we believe in Allah and follow the rules of Islam, they will get the votes.
>
> (Mehmet Ali, 52, textile worker, Bitlis, the HDP activist)

> My relatives supporting the AKP think that all members of the Kurdish movement are only occupied with the worldly affairs and material interests ("*dünyevi menfaat işleri*"), whereas they believe those AKP politicians care about the afterlife as they pray five times a day. Even one of our close relatives one day told me that 'your Kurdish guerillas might be good people, but they would be better if they perform their prayers.'
>
> (Azad, 30, construction worker, Bitlis, the HDP activist)

It is known that the Kurdish movement recently attempts to address the religious-conservative Kurdish electorate through particular symbolic moves - the organization of traditional Islamic scholars of Kurds (*mele*s in DİAYDER), the Democratic Congress of Islam, the civil Friday prayers (Çiçek, 2016). However, these moves are not seen as "authentic" but "hypocritical" by the religious-conservative Kurdish voters. Indeed, most of the pro-AKP Kurds stated that they do not see the Islamic initiative of the Kurdish movement sincere. After all, the AKP's Islamist articulations continue to be more influential.

It is possible to contend that the AKP brokers successfully disseminate the party's Islamist articulations and frameworks on the ground. First and foremost, AKP brokers in everyday life resonate with the habitus of the poor religious-conservative Kurdish electorate. Çiçek (2008) argues that, although the Kurdish people do not totally embrace the ideological orientations of the Islamist parties (RP and AKP), they have still supported the Islamists because they believe their appearance, body language and everyday practices are very similar to themselves. At the local level, the AKP brokers often employ the Sunni-Islamic references in the party campaigns and visiting the poor households during their fieldwork (Doğan, 2016, pp. 74-75). As

I argued previously, the party brokers exploit all local-religious-based opportunities in mobilizing the Kurdish conservatives in Bağcılar. The AKP's women visit the religious-conservative Kurdish women when their husbands are not at home, which accords with the Sunni-Islamic norms. The party women meet with the Kurdish housewives for reading Quran and *mawlid*, celebrating the birthday of Prophet Muhammad, etc. In a similar vein, the AKP's male brokers make visits to the Islamic communities, religious associations and foundations, mosque groups and the Quran schools in the district. To put it another way, the brokers create religious-based-symbolic-universe for the Kurdish poor. With the efforts of the brokers, religiosity turns into an indispensable component of the AKP's local political machine. Furthermore, my interviews and participant observations reveal that, when it is necessary, the brokers directly use Islamist ideology as a cooptation strategy in mobilizing the poor religious-conservative Kurdish electorate in the district. The Kurdish voters embrace the party's Islamist ideology – especially in reference to ideal of *ummah* and the Muslim brotherhood.

> If we compare with the past, our country is in perfect shape today, Alhamdulillah. In the fields of technology, communication, and education, we become the world leader. All countries envy us. They cannot accept our successful progress. Christians and Jews cannot acknowledge this fact. It is indeed written in our Quran: Israelites always make trouble for Muslims. Today, in fact, Israelites do not only bother us, but they are also obsessed with the Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa. They oppress the Muslims in Palestine. Today, a little space left for Palestinians, those poor oppressed people. Who will be the voice to the problems of Muslim people? Our leader, Erdoğan, represents them, Erdoğan represents all Muslims in the world. It is Erdoğan who can only gather Islam countries together.
>
> (Nebahat, 45, Elazığ, Kurdish housewife, the AKP supporter)

It is known that in the construction of the "imagined nation" of *ummah* in the Islamist political tradition, "the infidels" are represented as the most significant antagonist. Through "Othering" discourses, the party and its voters are able to construct "the ummah." Although the definition of "the infidels" has stretched over

time, Islamists believe that the Jews ("Israelites") are the most dangerous "Other." In the narrative above, the representation of the Jewish and Christian (Western) "infidels" as the defining "other" shows the success of the party's Islamist propaganda among the religious-conservative Kurdish voters.

In order to test the relevance of the *ummah* ideal among the religious-conservative Kurds, in the interviews after 2015, I asked their opinions on the electoral alliance between the AKP and MHP, and hence the party's shift towards Turkish nationalism. Most of the interviewees said that they do not feel uncomfortable with the AKP's "so-called" nationalist twist. A veteran Kurdish official of the AKP, who has been very active in district organization for more than a decade, was annoyed by my question – on the party's shift towards Turkish nationalism– commented that "don't bother yourself *hocam*, our people today easily notice every dirty games upon us." Nonetheless, some pious Kurdish voters gave affirmative answers and said that they have been disturbed by the party's shift towards Turkish nationalism recently, but for the time being, they try to ignore this fact for the sake of "unity."

> I am Kurdish, my origin is Kurdish, my father and my mother are Kurdish. As far as I know, all my ancestors are Kurdish. In my family, we all speak Kurdish. I am very proud of my Kurdishness, Alhamdulillah, I am both proud of my Kurdishness and being Muslim […] But let me tell you something, my brother, sometimes you need to keep those criticisms for yourself. I mean, you know there is a famous [Turkish] saying, you must lose a fly to catch a trout ("*kaz gelecek yerden tavuk esirgenmez*"). Nowadays, I think like this. Now, we are in the middle of two elections, I only focus on the survival of my country, my land, my flag. I do not mind other things for now. I only wish and hope that my country, my religion, my Quran and my madrasahs would not get any damage. OK, for now, they can take away some of my [democratic] rights. But at least, I know I can safely live in my own homeland. (Gazi)

Some Kurdish informants who openly describe themselves as Islamists expressed their growing discontent with the AKP's ideological shift towards

"racism" – in their own words. Onur (Elazığ, 25), who is a member of the Islamist "young pioneers" and IHH's youth branch, stated that the discursive conflicts between the ummah-oriented and nationalism-oriented people have emerged within the party platforms as well as within their own circles in the recent period. Onur was concerned about the party's shift from "Islamic brotherhood" to "racism". He underscored that the number of those who made "chauvinist" remarks in the religious gatherings he attended has increased recently, yet some of his *brothers* ("*cemaat abileri*") kept their calm and condemned such "divisive" comments and warned them strictly against the pitfalls of Turkish racism. According to Onur, the Islamist Kurds like himself still wait an embracing attitude from the President Erdoğan and expect him to declare "the *ummah* and brother spirit" like the way it used to be in the past. Despite his criticisms, Onur underlined that he would vote for the AKP in the coming elections on account of his Muslim consciousness ("*Müslümanlık şuuru*") and the Islamic prudence principle ("*maslahat gereği*").[149] Likewise, Ramazan, who is a textile worker and keen advocate of Islamic sharia (with typical Islamist outlook, long beard, wearing long-sleeved cloak and turban) underscored that although he is acutely aware of the recent nationalist awakening, he would still vote for the AKP, as he stressed the lesser evil ("*ehvenişer*") principle.[150] He told that what he only cares about is the future of *ummah*.

> I swear to God, if someone better comes to the forefront, I am going to vote for him. But nobody comes out. Whoever wants to govern the country, they are worse than the AK party. We cannot find a true man to vote for. We cannot find somebody else to support. You tell me, my brother, who should I vote for? My character is not compatible with the CHP. Neither their way nor

[149] *Maslahat* (derived from *ıslahat* – reform or renewal) is basically the principle of interpretation and decision-making in the face of new developments according to the Islamic laws and methodologies. The principles of *maslahat* should not be in conflict with the Qur'anic verses and sunnah, and they should maintain the general interests of Muslims. For instance, since democracy is a novel concept and not included in the original Islamic law, it is considered as a matter of *maslahat*.

[150] *Ehvenişer* means the better option in terms of harm and evil than other bad options. It may be translated as the second-best/worst option. In Ottoman sharia law (*Mecelle*), it is said that among the two bad options, ehvenişer should be preferred.

> their nature is reasonable for us. Also, the HDP isn't appropriate for us, you see, they still support the terrorists. It is the AK party struggling under this burden now, they set up this system, at least they know how to handle this burden, so we will vote for it. Well, are they good enough? I do not think so. Do I really embrace their leader? Of course, not. Is it the right legal system I prefer? Of course, no. I prefer the true Islamic sharia. But I am looking around, I cannot find anyone else to vote.
>
> (Ramazan,48, Diyarbakır, textile-worker)

5.4.2 The AKP's anti-secularist anti-elitist discourse

Another significant articulation that is closely related with the Islamist ideology and widely used by the AKP is the anti-secularist anti-elitist framework. In the last two decades, the AKP has consolidated its power by reconstructing traditional cleavages (center vs. periphery), and the century-old political antagonisms (secularism vs. Islam, modernization vs. conservatism) and addressing the grievances of the poor religious masses. It has performed like a grand political machine that is fueled by the political antagonisms. By framing himself as "an ordinary man," "the man of the people" and/or "the voice of the common people" against the secular elites, Erdoğan has produced a solid electoral base among the poor religious-conservative masses in this period (Cagaptay, 2018, p. 3). As it is stated, the rightist-Islamist political actors are more successful in mobilizing the mass migrant population in the peripheries of metropolitan areas since the 1980s. Accordingly, Erdoğan and the AKP, have become successful in appealing to the popular sentiments and grievances of the poor religious-conservative segments in the urban areas through the anti-secular anti-elitist articulation. In general, Erdoğan and the AKP designate "elitism" with the secularist and militarist attitudes of the Kemalist upper-class that dominated the state bureaucracy until the 2000s. Accordingly, the party members and supporters have firmly believed that the secular Kemalist elites for a long time ignored them and marginalized their religious-conservative lifestyles. It is possible to argue that the

AKP's anti-elitism refers to, on the one hand, the identity-cleavages and, on the other hand, class-based antagonisms (Daragahi, 2018).

In parallel with the AKP's continuous anti-secularist anti-elitist rhetoric at the national level, the AKP brokers in Bağcılar reproduce these antagonistic discourses at the local level. Thus, the AKP's local political machine is fueled by the political antagonisms that are constructed and performed by the brokers on the ground. In the interviews, the AKP's local politicians and brokers often claimed that the poor religious-conservative masses were "despised," "discriminated," "oppressed," "excluded" and "marginalized" by the secular elites for almost 90 years because of their religious lifestyles. They complained that the secular middle-classes still stigmatize them as "bigots" ("*yobaz*") "bin-heads" ("*bidonkafalı*") or "reactionaries" ("*irticacı*"). Throughout my fieldwork, I noticed that the anti-secularist anti-elitist rhetoric is not only performed during the political meetings or electoral campaigns by the AKP politicians/brokers but articulated through their own life stories or reflected upon their everyday narratives. This rhetoric is very influential on the Kurdish sector as well. They expressed their anti-secular anti-elitist sentiments by citing instances from their past:

> After I was engaged, my fiancé and I went to the Çamlıca Social Facilities of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality [in Üsküdar], we wanted to drink a cup of tea in view of Bosporus. At that time, the municipality belonged to the CHP. As my wife wearing a headscarf, they did not let us in, they did not allow us to get in. Can you believe this? I mean, I got married in 1990, then it would have happened in 1989. Either 1988 or 1989. So, imagine that I was going to a social facility that belongs to the public with my fiancé to have a cup of tea, and then they discriminated us. It was supposed to be a public institution. I was treated as a second-class citizen, even a third-class citizen. Why? Because my wife wears a headscarf. And that day they kicked us out. I tried to get in with an anger and a feeling of defeat because I was young because I did not want to be humiliated in front of my fiancé. The guards and officials standing at the door did not allow us, I remember, I had a long quarrel with them. I almost got beaten. And when I got out of there, I felt like they put a bullet in my head.
>
> (Sadık, 58 years old, Elazığ, Kurdish, private contractor)

In line with the general discrimination/exclusion claims, the Kurdish brokers of the AKP particularly refer to the harsh secularist measures during the 28 February process in explaining their anti-secular anti-elitist sentiments. The story of Öztürk family, the religious-conservative Kurdish family of Malatya origin, who live in a middle-class gated community in Bağcılar, clearly exemplifies this pattern: In my home visit to Öztürks, they said that their older daughter wearing headscarf could not get a college education in Turkey because of the Kemalist-secularist pressure during the 28 February, and therefore, they had no option but to send her daughter abroad to get undergraduate degree. This woman who got educated abroad supported the RP in past and is a supporter of the AKP today. Öztürks said, that unlike their first daughter, their younger daughter, also wearing headscarf, freely gets an education in a prestigious pro-government private university (Şehir University) in Istanbul. Öztürks claimed that their older daughter has developed a Muslim consciousness because of the pressure she had experienced in the past; owing to this experience, she appreciates the pro-Muslim political environment provided by the AKP today. However, they underlined that their younger daughter has adopted a cynical attitude towards politics, and she always seeks something to make fun of. Öztürks believe that the transfer of the narrative of the 28 February "persecution and trauma" to the next generation is their "holy duty." This epitome reveals that the ghost of Kemalism still haunts the religious-conservative voters – including the Kurdish ones. While narrating their older daughter's story of exclusion, Öztürks never problematize their privileged social status – sending a daughter abroad for university education is indeed luxurious consumption. The Öztürks is one of the rare examples of upward class mobility of the pro-AKP Kurdish migrants among my informants. The Öztürks' father –the only breadwinner in the family– has maintained his textile trade business

for more than 25 years. He stated that he started from scratch, he worked as an ordinary manual laborer in the textile (cloth dyeing) sector for quite a while in the 1990s, and then he established his own business. When I asked him how much his business is worth today, he only comments that "don't ask such questions, my brother, it is enough Alhamdulillah."

The anti-secularist anti-elitist rhetoric that revolves around the claims of discrimination against Muslim believers has been articulated not only by the Kurdish middle class, it is also quite popular among the Kurdish poor as well. Although the 28 February does not necessarily correspond to their own life stories, which were indeed shaped by the forced migration, dispossession and deprivation processes, the religious-conservative Kurdish poor have begun to express their grievances in reference to anti-elitist anti-secularist rhetoric with the AKP's framing of macro-politics. One may argue that the AKP has successfully spread anti-elitist anti-secularist discourses among the Kurdish voters, who often relates their own ethnic victimization with the victimization of Islamists in the past. Many Kurdish voters believe that the Kemalist-secular elites marginalized and suppressed both the Islamic and Kurdish identities until the AKP era. The Kurdish voters feel strong empathy towards the party as their own stories involve multiple exclusions – on the dimensions of ethnicity, class, and religiosity.

At this juncture, it is worth mentioning that the AKP's Kurdish brokers in the district articulate their anti-elitist anti-secularist sentiments through spatial dualities and references. For example, similar to Peyami Safa's (1995) historical depiction of traditional-conservative Fatih and modern-secular Harbiye districts in opposition to each other, the Kurdish brokers of the party positioned their poor district, Bağcılar, in contradiction to Etiler –modern, secular and wealthy district– in their narratives. This

spatial duality/reference does not only pertain to the contradiction between the religious-conservative and the secular-modern lifestyles, but it also implies the class-based antagonisms and grievances. In the narratives of the Kurdish brokers, their Muslim lifestyles against the modern-secular lifestyles of elites overlap with their perception of working-class position against the wealthy.

> Please look at where the AK party gets votes in Istanbul, how does it get these votes? Today the AK party gets most of its votes from a few Istanbul districts. Those old Istanbulites, those rich Turks living on the coasts of Boğaziçi have never voted for Tayyip Erdoğan. The people of Etiler, Beşiktaş and Kadıköy do not vote for Erdoğan, we the Bağcılar people support him. And especially Erdogan receives most votes from the Kurds in Bagcilar. Why? Because he does not make discrimination, he approaches us equally. I think it is the Kurds in this country who has most benefited from the AK party and Erdoğan's leadership.
>
> (Serhat, 36, Malatya, AKP member, textile worker)

> When you look at the people in Etiler or people in Beşiktaş, they are exhausted psychologically, their spirits have already died. But when you look at our people in Bağcılar, we are alive, we are more energetic. The people in Etiler have already experienced everything, they have not seen poverty, they have not seen deprivation, they have not faced any problems in their lives. Let me tell you, my brother, they have lived luxury and comfortable lives, they tasted every available thing in the world, they have already been satisfied long ago. Now nothing can satisfy them anymore, politics cannot satisfy them; religion cannot satisfy them. The worldly existence ("*varlık alemi*") cannot satisfy them anymore. But this is a real problem. For instance, I have a rich friend living in Etiler. When he comes here, he gets surprised because everything is positive here, we have not lost our excitement, our energy. My friend is indeed really amazed by the Bağcılar people. When I look at him, I see that he lost all his life energy long ago. He does not have any expectation from future. He cannot develop a new perspective. This man is not interested in this country anymore. No hope, no expectation, period. But look at us, our people in Bağcılar still have high expectations and hopes. They call us the slum dwellers ("*varoşlar*"), but it is the slums having expectations and hopes in Istanbul. When we come together, we talk about politics, economy, and business. We love this country; we try to save this country. But if you visit those elites in Etiler, their excitement was over, because they have already been fully satisfied. They do not know who is poor and who is hungry in their own neighborhood. That is a bad thing, actually. But in here, in Bağcılar, you know, although they call us the slums, everything goes very nice. There is a great solidarity here, there is an integration here.
>
> (Sabri, 52, Elazığ, AKP executive, operating the municipality's café)

It is interesting that the narrator above characterizes the poor Kurdish electorate who supports the AKP in Bağcılar with dynamism, hopes and expectations, whereas he characterizes the "Turkish elites" in Etiler who support the CHP with despair, depression and dissatisfaction. The Kurdish interviewees attributed these contrasting features to the different local dynamics, class positions and religious beliefs.

While the anti-secular anti-elitist discourse of the AKP's Kurdish voters are mostly framed against the CHP's secular-elites, sometimes this rhetoric is also applied to the HDP elites. Some poor religious-conservative Kurdish voters claim that that the HDP is the party of the "wealthy," "elites" and "upper classes" in Istanbul. They often explain the elitist status of the HDP in reference to the votes of the party received from the affluent districts in Istanbul – such as Kadıköy, Beşiktaş and Şişli. In their narratives, Erdoğan and AKP are portrayed as the sole representative of the poor in opposition to the CHP's and the HDP's "elites." One may conclude that the class-based grievances of the Kurdish brokers and poor Kurdish electorate, whether being articulated through spatial references or not, become an indispensable component of the AKP's ideological machine.

5.4.3 "The internal-external enemies" and the cult of Erdoğan

In the previous section, I mentioned the AKP's mobilization strategy of maintaining social and political antagonisms and escalating existing tensions in society in order to consolidate its electoral base – especially, in times of crisis. In a similar vein, the AKP's rhetoric of "imagined" internal and external enemies brought success to the party in subsequent elections (Doğan, 2016, p. 57). According to Bozarslan (2015), since the early 2010s, the AKP's portrayal of "the public enemies" and the

representation of Erdoğan as “the man of public” have consolidated the party’s electorate (p. 20). The AKP disseminate “the public enemies” discourse to produce “climate of fear” for constructing hegemony (Akkoyunlu, 2017, p. 58). For any hegemonic political machine, consent is one facet of its power-building, the other aspect involves coercion, intimidation and -if necessary- punishment. The AKP brokers widely refer to the “internal enemies” and “external enemies” for intimidating and mobilizing the religious-conservative Kurdish electorate. The brokers remind the electorate that, if the AKP lose its power, the country will tear apart. In a focus group interview, a Kurdish voter “raised [his] concerns about enemies” and “falling down of the country” as follows:

> There is a huge plot against the AK Party and Turkey, our [Kurdish] citizens know this plot very well, so they support our party. I think this way. I know if England, France and America today criticize us, if they criticize our leader, then it is against our interests. If we let this happen, there might be a huge loss for our country. Why do they intervene in our politics? Can you see a sound reason? They try to interfere with Turkey. Today, they are playing with the dollar and interest rates, they are trying to control our economy. We know those kinds of plots very well. We also know that there is a specific *international plot against the Kurdish people living in this country*, those enemies are trying to exploit some Kurdish citizens. We know they are trying to mess with us, the Kurds. [italics are used for emphasis]
>
> (Bilal, 45, Malatya, shopkeeper)

However, as it is seen in this narrative, the external enemy discourse in just one side of the story. On the one hand, the representation of the Western countries as “external” enemies, and on the other hand, the representation of CHP and the HDP as “internal” enemies are to some extent influential on the Kurdish electorate. In many interviews, the Kurdish poor voters raised their concerns about the existing external and internal enemies and the potential threats in future. Especially the Gezi Uprising and the failed coup attempt have fueled the fears and paranoia among these people. These two critical moments seem to be traumatizing:

> Their purpose is so obvious; they did the same thing in Egypt. I believe they wanted to divide Turkey. Isn't it the same thing in the coup attempt? I am sure, at the coup night, PKK, Israel, Americans and FETO were all waiting behind the borders of Turkey to invade our country. They were all informed about the coup. If the coup had become successful, they would have divided our country like Syria. We would have been torn down. If we live today in peace, it is because of our solidarity against the coup attempt. We live under the flag of Turkey, *we are Turkish citizens and Muslims, Alhamdulillah*. [Despite his Kurdish origin, he declared himself as Turkish in the interview]
> (Berat, 33, Malatya, textile worker)

Many Kurdish informants underlined their anxiety over the recent past events in Turkey – terror attacks, suicide bombings, etc. A Kurdish shopkeeper and active supporter of the AKP in Bağcılar, accused "the wicked businessmen" who involve trade relationships with the Europeans and Americans as "spies." He believed these businessmen would have at least been influenced by "the enemies' viewpoints." AKP's dissemination of the enemy discourse is very influential on its electorate. A Kurdish Islamist, Ramazan, pointed that although he saw that many AKP politicians had committed obvious *haram*s, such as corruption and favoritism, he still supported the party because of the "external enemies." Ramazan says that,

> I believe there are liars, bribers, or thieves among the AK Party members. I am aware of the fact that there are some party members who know nothing about *halal*s and *haram*s, and I acknowledge that some of them spend the public resources for their own interests. But, you know, they still spend much more for the public interest. They serve for the citizens. People like me try to ignore their mistakes. [İK: Aren't you uncomfortable with this fact?] Of course, I am uncomfortable. I see all the mistakes that they made in the last five or six years. But I ask myself, let us suppose if another party comes to power, will they able to keep the country stable and in unity? The whole world seems to be hostile towards us. Every enemy is pulling our country from one side, they are trying to tear down our unity. They are trying to make us look like Syria or Iraq. Therefore, for supporting my country, I continue to vote for the AK Party.

In addition, some Kurdish brokers and religious-conservative Kurdish voters stated that they believe the existence of "specific plots against Erdoğan" by the external and internal enemies. These interviewees declared that they defend Erdoğan in every circumstance against the domestic and international plots.

> Do you know what are they [the enemies] trying to do right now? They are trying to overthrow Erdoğan, that is why they call him a dictator. They want a coup general like Sisi to govern Turkey, so then they can easily interfere with our domestic affairs. The Americans, Europeans, Russians, and Jews think the same way, they are all against Erdoğan. That is why we stand strongly united behind our leader. You see, in the last election, CHP and HDP made a collaboration to overthrow Erdoğan. They used to be enemies, but now you can see how they become all brothers and sisters. All their plan is based on overthrowing Erdoğan. We do not let this happen. We are ready to fight to the last drop of our blood. We love Tayyip Erdoğan very much. We will destroy the plots of infidels against Erdoğan. (Behçet)

As it is seen in this narrative, poor voters' "symbolic and affective identification" with Erdoğan has become the main linkage especially after the failed coup attempt in the 2016 (Küçük & Türkmen, 2020). The religious-conservative Kurds supporting the party easily identify themselves with Erdoğan. In other words, there is strong emotional identification of the Kurdish electorate with Erdoğan. Çelik and Balta (2018) suggest that electorate's identification with the populist leaders is "a bottom-up process whereby leaders become the object of love precisely through the hardships they manage to survive, the loss and injury they go through, and the perceived similarity of experience and emotions by their followers" (p.6). Behçet remarks that

> For us, there is only Erdoğan. Wherever he goes, in all circumstances, we will support him. We'll never let him down, we'll never give him up. […] I always praise God, oh my Lord, take my lifetime and give it to Erdoğan. I don't mind my children or my own life. I always pray like that, oh my Lord, please give my lifetime to Erdoğan. In the last election, some people said, 'we will not make Erdoğan president,' look what happened to them then. Erdogan becomes president, they are in prison. Believe me, if God Almighty did not help him, Erdogan would not have been the president of our country.

It is interesting to see that narrator of the above quote, Behçet, believes that Erdoğan has the mercy and blessing of God upon him. Likewise, in the interviews with the Kurdish brokers, I noticed that they often praised charismatic personality of Erdoğan. Especially, the brokers glorified the Erdoğan's character (e.g. being intelligent, honest, brave, witty, straightforward, etc.), as they often described

himself like a sacred figure. Their adherence to the leader cult of Erdoğan often emerges as their main reason for voting for the AKP. Many Kurdish informants underlined that they vote for their leader, Erdoğan, not the whole party. These instances show that Erdoğanism is not a mechanical process on the ground, but it relies on the construction of consent among the electorate through charismatic patrimonial leadership. The leadership of Erdoğan fuels the party machine from top-down fashion. At this juncture, it is necessary to state that the anti-Erdoğanist arguments of the opposition parties work in reverse direction and consolidate the religious-conservative voters further under the leadership of Erdoğan. As much as the opposition parties criticize Erdoğan, its electorate more and more defend the Erdoğanist regime.

Nevertheless, some Islamist Kurds supporting the party underscored the "superficiality" of the enemy discourse and "absurdity" of the domesticity ("*yerlilik*", "*millilik*") emphasis of Erdoğan, and they suggested the AKP politicians to focus on the real interests of *ummah* instead of distracting attention with such "superficial" and "absurd" discourses. These Islamist informants emphasized that they are aware of the party's lack of interest in the service of Islam, as is seen in the Mavi Marmara incident, but they still support the party for the time being because of the lesser evil ("*ehvenişer*") principle.

5.4.4 Historical rupture from the "dark past" (1980s-1990s)

In the early 1990s, Kurdish villagers "were compelled to decide between joining pro-state militias, called village guards (*qoricîyan*), and thereby fighting against the PKK, or leaving their villages" (Aras, 2013, p. 2). During the OHAL period, millions

of Kurdish peasants were forced to leave their villages and towns.[151] Although the state's official policy towards the Kurdish population in Turkey had been traditionally based on denial and/or assimilation, it practiced direct violence to Kurdish minority in the 1980s and 1990s (Yeğen, 1999). In narrating their traumatic experiences in the 1990s, Kurdish informants often mentioned public offense, beating by the security forces, the JITEM and commando raids in the villages, systematic torture in police stations, kidnapping and unidentified murders, etc. A Kurdish informant supporting the AKP told his fear from the military as follows:

> I have always been puzzled when I see some of our citizens eagerly wanted to go to the military service. The military has always been a fear factor for us [i.e. Kurds], because we experienced what the military could be able to do in our village. They tortured us and ruined our village. Even today, when I hear the name of 'special forces,' my body starts to tremble with fear.
>
> (Necdet, 42, Bitlis, the AKP broker)

Most of the Kurdish informants I interviewed had been directly or indirectly exposed to violence and human rights abuses in the past. For some Kurdish voters, the AKP governments represent a clean rupture from such dark and awful memories. They believe that the policies of assimilation, intimidation, oppression, and human rights violations were ended by the party. As it is shown in the literature, the AKP's efforts to make a clean break from the previous militarist policies play a major role in the party's mobilization of Kurdish electorate (Günay, 2018, 2019). With the partial democratization moves, the AKP taps on the collective memory and popular fears of the Kurdish voters. In fact, for a long time, the AKP politicians kept mobilizing the Kurdish electorate by triggering their fear from the dark past and by reminding the insecure environment of the 1990s. When "the peace talks" ended and violent clashes

[151] It is known that the OHAL (the State of Emergency Rule) was a legal framework that was used for 15 years (between 1987-2002) to eliminate the logistical support of the PKK. However, the oppressive measures within the OHAL rule also targeted civilians, led to serious human rights violations and unidentified murders.

were once again escalated in 2015, the PM Davutoğlu announced that it is only the AKP that could bring peace to the region:

> If the AK party loses the elections, the terrorist gangs will wander around here; the white Toros cars will appear once again. We will not leave this region to the unidentified murderers. Do not worry; we are not going back to the eighties and nineties. Before the initiative for peace and democracy begins, when the PKK attacked us, I gave a clear order. We would deal with the problem of terror but could not harm the lives and properties of civilians (Hürriyet, 2015).

The AKP's democratization attempts in the early 2000s, which were induced as a part of EU accession requirements, become influential on the minority populations, to some extent, in Turkey. According to my interviewees, "the Kurdish issue" was no longer considered as "terror" or "security" problem and began to be discussed as a democracy issue thanks to the party. The interviewees declared that the AKP's resistance toward the militarist regime as well as its steps towards democratization are valuable. Some of them particularly emphasized the significance of the party's removal of the OHAL rule in the Kurdish region:

> In one of his first rallies in the [Eastern] region in 2002, Erdoğan promised to remove the OHAL. Soon after, he actually did it. Speaking Kurdish in public was banned in the past as if there had been no Kurdish language existed. Our [Kurdish] people were regarded as aliens as if they came from outer space. What happened then? The AK Party lifted all the bans on the Kurdish language, people can now freely speak their mother tongue. *Even in prison meetings, people are able to talk in Kurdish*. The party recognized all the cultural rights of Kurdish citizens, there is an elective course in Kurdish in public schools. Kurds are able to establish their own institutions and private schools thanks to the AK Party governments. All these developments have become influential on people's support for the party. (Necdet)

> Today, Kurds may become attorneys, judges, bureaucrats. Today, the top men in the country have Kurdish origins. Do you think we have a problem anymore under these circumstances? Well, I do not think so. We may become whatever we want to be in this country now. We have the same rights. There is no discrimination anymore. Even there is positive discrimination towards Kurdish citizens. Let us take the Kurdish elective course. You know, the Kurdish language becomes part of the curriculum. But please also look at the application statistics on this Kurdish elective course. Maybe one or two percent. None of my Kurdish friends and neighbors have chosen this course for their children. I let my children to choose whichever course they want, but

> even they did not want the Kurdish elective. They instead chose science courses. Because our cultural rights have already been recognized. There is no problem anymore. I can listen to Kurdish music; I can watch the Kurdish TV channel. There is no restriction. But you know, it was horrible back then, it was horrible in the 1980s. We experienced many troubles in the past. When I first came to Istanbul, I had a small battery-powered cassette player while I was living in a bachelor's room. Kurdish music was banned, and the restrictions were so serious. To find Kurdish music cassettes, I used to go to the peddlers in the back streets of Topkapı. I used to hide those cassettes in my underwear, I carried them like a shameful thing. (Sabri)

In the eyes of the pro-AKP Kurds the party has made huge efforts in terms of democracy and human rights. While almost all Kurdish citizens in the region were exposed to war and became traumatized in the past, only religious-conservative Kurds have not become resentful towards the state. These groups have been content with the AKP's "Kurdish initiative" and embraced the party's Islamic brotherhood discourse. During my fieldwork, I observed that the Islamic brotherhood discourse became a cure for some Kurdish groups in healing their traumas. After all, break from the dark past, the democracy initiative and Islamic brotherhood supported the AKP's local political machine among the Kurdish electorate.

Through participant observations, I noticed that those Kurdish groups who had been victims of the direct state violence and intensely subjected to the torture, harassment and oppression in the 1990s have often developed a strong perception of Kurdishness; whereas those Kurdish groups who had not exposed to direct state violence or opted for village guardship to escape from the violence and forced migration have weaker perception of ethno-national identity. The likelihood of voting for the AKP is higher among the latter groups. Therefore, the differential treatment and various trajectories in the past probably influence the different forms of Kurdish grievances. In addition, while some religious conservative Kurds are satisfied with the AKP's symbolic democratic moves, others are not satisfied and emphasize that "the Kurdish initiative" is still incomplete and some fundamental

rights are still lacking – e.g. the education in the mother tongue. The latter group believe that the AKP partially and improperly addressed the Kurdish issue. In other words, AKP's democratic initiative has become influential on the some religious-conservative Kurdish segments but not fulfilled the expectations of all Kurds.

5.5 Conclusion

In the last two decades, the AKP's hegemony has depended upon its capacity to create an inter-class alliance at the national level and to construct active consent among the poor religious-conservative Kurdish electorate in urban peripheries. The party's clientelistic-machine provides individual favors and special treatment (e.g. tenders and contracts) for the middle-and-upper-classes, and material inducements (e.g. employment and aids) and moral support for the poor. It is necessary to underline that, by appeasing their hopes, desires and expectations, and recognizing their vulnerable subjectivities, the AKP has successfully mobilized the Kurdish poor. In this chapter, I showed that the AKP make use of specific linkages and articulations in attracting the Kurdish voters in Bağcılar.

I used three levels of analysis: resource mobilization, space-making, and identity/culture frames. Regarding resource mobilization, I discussed the influence of Kurdish brokers and associations, problem-solving networks and social assistance, discourses of developmentalism and services-politics. Regarding space-making, I discussed the establishment of the Islamist spatial regime and the dominant Islamic communities and tariqats in the district. Regarding identity/culture frames, I discussed the influence of the party's Islamist articulation, the anti-secularist anti-elitist discourse, the internal-and-external enemy discourse, the leader cult of Erdoğan and the (historical) rupture from the past.

To summarize, first and foremost, the co-ethnic brokers and Kurdish associations play a significant role in the AKP's mobilization of the Kurdish voters. The locally-embedded and multi-tasking brokers recognize the precarious/vulnerable subjectivity of the Kurdish poor and provide problem-solving networks for them at the grassroots level. It is the Kurdish brokers who distribute municipally controlled privately-funded aids and continuously get in touch with the lives of the Kurdish poor. The Kurdish brokers of the party act like the drivers of the clientelist-machine. It is necessary to recognize that the establishment and functioning of the AKP's clientelist-machine necessitates a particular form of Islamist spatial regime, which accord with the political aims and cultural-ideological norms of the party. Therefore, Islamization of Bağcılar, especially at the hands of Islamic communities and tariqats, gain special importance. Along with the Islamic actors at the local level, the AKP's Islamist ideology creates a symbolic universe (around the principles of Islamic solidarity and belonging) for the poor Kurdish voters.

The AKP's local political machine has been fueled with and supported by antagonistic discourses (Islamism vis-à-vis anti-secularism and anti-elitism). The religious-conservative Kurdish voters' adherence to the leader cult of Erdoğan and their popular fears in the face of internal/external enemies are pillars of the political machine. The party brokers articulate such frames at the grassroots level for mobilizing the Kurdish electorate. It is possible to say that, with its antagonistic politics, the AKP (and its local brokers) successfully catalyzes the political fault-lines affiliated with the Kurdishness, poverty and religiosity, and captures the sentiments of religious-conservative Kurds.

CHAPTER 6

UNDERSTANDING VOTING BEHAVIOR IN BAĞCILAR: THE HDP AND PRO-HDP KURDS

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, based on my fieldwork in Bağcılar between 2014 and 2018, I explore the class-based dynamics of Kurdish voting for the HDP, and HDP's organizational linkages and political articulations in mobilizing Kurdish electorate on the ground. As it is stated previously, HDP is an example of contentious "movement party," because there is a deep-rooted mobilization history and political tradition behind it – i.e. the Kurdish movement since the 1980s and the pro-Kurdish parties since the 1990s. It is possible to conceptualize the HDP as an expressive medium for Kurdish discontent and a constitutive environment of dissident Kurdish subjectivity.[152] In this chapter, I argue that collective grievances and relative deprivation of Kurdish people have a causal effect on the participation of and support for the contentious movement-party. Therefore, firstly, I will show how the grievances and relative deprivation lead to the HDP, and secondly, I will discuss the mobilization strategies of the HDP in terms of space and resources in Bağcılar.

The previous statistical analysis indicates that, despite the general condition of poverty, the pro-HDP Kurds are relatively better-off and advantageous than the pro-AKP Kurds in the urban and local contexts. The regression estimations reveal that the pro-HDP Kurds have often higher income and education levels than the pro-AKP Kurds. The analysis of the employment and occupational status also confirm

[152] If the party did not provide expressive medium for the Kurdish unrest and discontent, the everyday politics of Kurdish people who had been already injured and traumatized with violence and war of the 1990s would have been radicalized. Kurdish youth, for example, found the party's politics very moderate and practice their "radical politics" on the streets, see Darıcı (2011).

this pattern: the percentages of middle-class occupations (petty-bourgeoisie; educated-professionals, such as lawyers, engineers, doctors, architects; white-collars, such as private and public sector professionals, etc.) are considerably higher among the pro-HDP Kurds than the pro-AKP Kurds. The former's prospects of upward mobility are higher.[153] In addition, the financial capability estimations in the previous chapters show that there is a strong negative relationship between the financial capability and the HDP voting: As the financial capability levels decrease, Kurds are more likely to vote for the HDP. In other words, the pro-HDP Kurds more often declare themselves worse-off than the pro-AKP Kurds.

By looking at these findings, one could posit that, although the pro-HDP Kurds have higher prospects for upward mobility compared to the pro-AKP Kurds, they are more likely to be discontent/dissatisfied with their conditions than the latter group. It is possible to explain the higher contentment/satisfaction of the pro-AKP Kurds with the clientelist-machine appeals and Islamic beliefs, but it is not easy to explain the case of pro-HDP Kurdish voters by looking at the objective standards. [154] I argue that the contrast between the relatively higher income and lesser contentment of the pro-HDP Kurds can be understood through the "relative deprivation" (RD) framework (Gurney & Tierney, 1982; Gurr, 1993).[155]

RD cannot be understood through hard facts or objective standards, as it is a "subjective evaluation." In this chapter, I will show that upwardly-mobile pro-HDP

[153] The extent of middle-class jobs is 22 percent for the pro-HDP Kurds and 13 percent for the pro-AKP Kurds in the KONDA's Kurdish sample of Istanbul.
[154] The relatively higher contentment of the pro-AKP Kurds may be attributed to their higher religiosity levels. Islam requires contentedness and endurance in the face of deprivations in this world, the believers must search justice in the after world. Religiosity might be effective on the cooptation of religious-conservative Kurdish poor who tend to refrain from complaining about their deprivation.
[155] "What makes RD so useful is the recognition that those who should feel deprived by objective standards often do not feel deprived and those who are not objectively deprived often feel that they are. It is the contextual and flexible nature of social comparisons that remind researchers that RD and injustice are not the property of a single person or group but rather the property of particular relationships." (Smith et al. 2012, p.220)

Kurds believe that they do not have what they deserve, or they deserve better. The Kurdish political preference towards the HDP can be explained with reference to RD phenomenon, which trigger a social movement in its initial phase (Gurr, 1993).[156] According to the RD theorists, if people live under the subsistence level, they are materially deprived and dependent, and their main concern is about the bread-and-butter issues, their discontent may not translate into opposition and contentious politics (Gurr, 1993).[157] I find out that the upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments are more likely to declare their discontent and support the contentious movement politics of the HDP, whereas the more precarious Kurdish poor are more likely to be exposed to the clientelist-machine appeals of the AKP.

Following the RD approach, I formulate the three main steps of the Kurdish voting for the HDP as follows: the emergence of Kurdish grievances,[158] politicization of Kurdish grievances and discontent in the urban context, and lastly the support for the contentious politics and the HDP. While Kurdish grievances refer to their communal perception of injustice, their collective experience of "illegitimate inequality" (Smith et al., 2012, p. 220), Kurdish relative deprivation connote their disadvantaged position vis-à-vis the hegemonic Turkish ethnicity. Several overlapping factors are influential in the emergence of Kurdish grievances and relative deprivation: historical denial of Kurdish ethnicity, Turkish state's

[156] Romano's (2006) discussion of "the Kurdish nationalist movement" with reference to the social movement literature helped me a lot. It is indeed Romano who firstly introduce the relative deprivation concept in the study of the Kurdish movement. Gurney and Tierney (1982) state that not only social-psychological but also resource mobilization approaches "acknowledge that deprivations of various kinds may play a role as background factors in emerging social movements" (p. 35).
[157] In addition, Hobsbawm argues that "when people are really hungry, they are too busy seeking food to do much else; otherwise they die from hunger" (Hobsbawm, 1959, p. 79)
[158] Gurr (1993) argues that "[g]rievances about differential treatment and the sense of group cultural identity provide the essential bases for mobilization and shape the kinds of claims made by the group's leaders. If grievances and group identity are both weak, there is little prospect of mobilization by any political entrepreneurs in response to any external threat or opportunity. On the other hand, deep grievances and a strong sense of group identity and common interest -as among black South Africans and Shi'i and Kurds in Iraq- provide highly combustible material that fuels spontaneous action whenever external control weakens" (p. 67).

assimilationist policies towards Kurdish minority (Yeğen, 1990), socialization and politicization within/around the Kurdish movement (Romano, 2006), exposure to violence, oppression and war (Yeğen et al., 2016), experiences of forced migration and dispossession in the 1990s (Göral, 2016), exploitation within neoliberal capitalist relations in the urban context, etc. Nonetheless, as the study of the RD and grievances deserve a profound analysis from a social-psychological perspective, I take these factors as given. I argue that by politicizing and articulating the Kurdish grievances and relative deprivation, especially among those upwardly-mobile segments, the HDP performs as a contentious movement party at the local level.

As the movement scholars argue, the relative deprivation and/or grievances are necessary but insufficient conditions; the sustainability of these movements are also significant. Along with some structural opportunities, resources (such as money, labor, knowledge, media, and elite allies) must be available for the contentious movements and parties. In this regard, I will show that the financial, human and intellectual capital provided by the upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments, who have already felt strong discontent, are very significant in terms of the resource mobilization of the HDP at the local level. I will discuss that, on the one hand, Kurdish shopkeeper, tradesmen, and businessmen provide significant financial capital, and other hand, young-educated Kurdish professionals (e.g. engineers, lawyers, sociologists, etc.) provide significant human capital to the movement-party. Though my interviews and participant observations in the HDP Bağcılar headquarters, I specified that the upper-echelons of working-class, white-collars, professionals and petty-bourgeoisie have become the driving force behind the HDP in the last decade. Despite being few in numbers, young-educated Kurdish professional class are the new conveyors of the party. Today, the young

professionals, who often defend activism-based politics, have begun to outweigh the old cadre of party officials in the organizational and decision-making processes.

It is in fact not surprising to see there is an overlap between the emergence of this small but effective group of Kurdish middle-class activists and the HDP's transformation into a movement party in the last decade. New social movement (NSM) theory for a long time emphasize the necessity of middle-class guidance for social movements. In the NSM approach, it is often the middle-class supporters, who are discontent with the established politics and demand recognition for their identities and distinctions, participate in and support the social movements. It is no coincidence that like NSM's prioritization of identity politics over class politics, the HDP predominantly prioritizes the identity politics today. Following the NSM approach, the upwardly-mobile Kurdish voters with strong feelings of discontent supporting the HDP at the local level is a significant subject.

Besides resource mobilization approach, I will discuss how the pro-Kurdish space-making practices led by the Kurdish movement and the HDP become very influential on mobilization of Kurdish voters in Bağcılar. As it is argued previously, while the existence of grievances and discontent is the initial step, the politicization of these factors must be maintained by the contentious movement; and for the politicization, the party spaces become a vital medium. The everyday encounters in the party's "free space" and other counter-hegemonic/pro-Kurdish spaces become critical in the politicization and articulation of Kurdish grievances and discontent. I will show how the HDP mobilize the deep-rooted grievances and discontent among the Kurdish electorate through space-making activities in everyday life. The discursive frameworks, resource mobilization strategies and space-making practices of the HDP in addressing and mobilizing the Kurdish voters are equally important.

It is necessary to remember that there is a strong movement tradition behind the HDP; numerous pro-Kurdish political parties and associations since the late 1980s have contributed to this tradition. The contemporary agenda of the Kurdish movement (e.g. grassroots democracy, democratic Islam paradigm, pro-gender equality) shapes the contours of the HDP at the local level. It is a well-known fact that the Kurdish movement has recently adopted "democratic autonomy" perspective. This autonomy involves not only macro-politics, such as the autonomous local municipalities or the confederation model, but also micro-politics, such as autonomy and empowerment of subalterns. In the following sections, I will discuss the HDP's movement linkages and articulations in three levels: identity-cultural frames, space-making, and resource mobilization. The next section starts with the relative deprivation of the upwardly-mobile Kurdish voters, who often compare their status with the hegemonic Turkish ethnicity.

6.2 Identity and cultural frames

6.2.1 Articulation of the relative deprivation

Canan (35, Bitlis) is a member of the executive board of HDP in Bağcılar. She has a sister and two brothers. She has been living with her family in a modest apartment near the Bağcılar square. After her family's forced migration from Tatvan to Istanbul, Canan and her sister continued their education. While Canan was able to enroll in a public university, other members of the family kept working in the textile sector to maintain their subsistence. After getting her degree in industrial engineering from Balıkesir University, she started to work in the logistics department of a private company. She has been working as a professional in the private sector for more than 10 years in Istanbul. Considering her education, wage, and lifestyle, Canan is a

potential member of the small group of (emerging) Kurdish middle-class in the city. In my interview with her, Canan depicts her life story and dissident subjectivity in reference to "the relative deprivation," by comparing her life with her Turkish colleagues, as follows:

> Canan: Most of my family and relatives support the HDP. I think this is because of the suffering they experienced in the past and the anger they have felt later. They have horrible memories. I can tell you later. But there are a few distant relatives of mine who support the AKP. For example, I have an elderly uncle [i.e. in fact, his father's uncle] and his family voting for the AKP. I think it is because they have been living far away from us. If they have lived with us, they would have intensive exchanges with us, and their ideas would have probably changed. If we had kept our communication, they would have no reason to vote for the AKP. In my opinion, the decisive factor behind their voting for the AKP is religiosity […] When they [i.e. the uncle and his family] migrated, the forced migration and the village burnings had so far ended. The military completely burned down our village. Soon after the destruction, we moved to Tatvan, but my uncle and his family were patient and they continued to live in the village. Later, they migrated to Manisa for economic reasons. In the meantime, we first migrated to Tatvan's center and then to Istanbul. In our footsteps, some of our relatives came to Istanbul. As we became crowded and crowded here, our communication has intensified, thus, we have intensely influenced each other's opinions. We have shared our lives with each other. Young people have been influenced by this communication and shared experience. For example, always speaking Kurdish and watching Kurdish TV together, speaking about politics each and every day at home, expressing our ideological views have influenced our political preferences.
>
> İK: Before the interview, you said that you feel sometimes exhausted because of politics, can you explain this point a bit further?
>
> Canan: I think that all young Kurdish professionals experience this difficulty, especially in business life. For example, while I am at work, I'm also trying to manage the daily operations of the HDP. You know, for example, I always try to figure out solutions to the legal issues of the HDP members in Bağcılar, who are convicted of some fabricated crime by the authorities. I experience such difficulties also in my social life. For example, nowadays, I am trying to organize events to prevent the corruption of Kurdish youth in the art house. You know, I have all those things in my head. But my Turkish colleagues, who work by my side, think entirely career-oriented and professional. They are moving ahead of me.
>
> İK: You are right; politics is more decisive in your life…

> Canan: Suppose that, for example, I am trying to find a way to send money to Cavit,[159] but my Turkish colleague has never thought about such issues. I was devastated when I first heard that Cavit had been arrested [later imprisoned], so maybe at that moment, I would have ruined a project. It would have cost me my career. But he [i.e. the Turkish colleague] will never have such issues. You know, these things always happen in our lives.

In the narrative of Canan, there are multiple issues that we need to address, especially, in terms of the relationship between the relative deprivation and the contentious politics (i.e. the HDP voting). First, by telling the stories of her family and relatives, Canan underscores the fact that that Kurds' experience war, violence, suffering, and trauma in the past have turned into their collective grievance and dissident political identity later. Nevertheless, some of her relatives who had been also exposed to the forced migration policy have identified with and supported the AKP because of their dominant religious identity. Therefore, the political process is not uniform for all Kurdish migrants. The past experiences of violence and suffering do neither necessarily transform into hard feelings of grievances nor do they automatically translate into support for contentious politics. In Canan's narrative, it is seen that the contentious politics support and the HDP voting need intermediation. The socialization and everyday interactions between the pro-Kurdish family members and relatives (i.e. the kinship networks) turn out to be a crucial mechanism for the HDP voting, otherwise, their dissociation from these interactions and socialization might lead to the AKP voting. Last but not least, Canan draws attention to the disadvantages of young Kurdish professionals because of their political baggage. She declares herself "relatively deprived" by comparing her status with the more advantageous Turkish colleagues, presumably who do not think about political issues at the workplace like herself.

[159] Cavit was imprisoned because of his social media posts involving criticism towards the government's oppressive measures against the Kurds. He was released after 3 months of prison sentence.

Recently, Canan was more distracted in her job and daily routines because her best friend, Cavit, was sentenced and imprisoned because of a "superficial" accusation (expressing his criticisms towards the government in social media). Before and during the interview, Canan seemed very upset and overwhelmed by the political pressure surrounding herself, her community and friends. Nevertheless, under these adverse conditions, instead of disguising her political identity, Canan opt for boosting her activism in the party. The political pressure sharpens her dissident subjectivity and catalyzes her participation in the HDP in Bağcılar, as she declared at the end of the interview, "today we [i.e. Kurdish activists] need to work more for the party in order to compensate the absence of our imprisoned Kurdish comrades." Her experience and feeling of "relative deprivation" vis-à-vis the government's accelerating pressure toward the pro-Kurdish politics dialectically make Canan more supportive of the HDP.

The existing literature underscores this dialectical relationship between the oppressive/violent measures and the dissident Kurdish political identity. Perouse (2010) argues that the forced migration of Kurds "have the effect of triggering crises of identity consciousness and/or leading to forms of identity objectification of a reactive or relational nature" (p. 2). Vali argues that the "dialectics of violence defines not only the ethos of Kurdish national identity, but also the modality of its relationship with its others." The traumatic experiences of war, violence, migration, and dispossession in the 1980s and 1990s have turned into a "critical juncture," triggered dissident Kurdish identity and determined the "path of dependence" for the contentious politics. Nonetheless, the past is not the only independent variable in this formula. Many Kurdish activists and voters articulate their discontent not only through the past oppression/violence but also through more recent experiences of

political-economic injustices in the city, in comparison to the hegemonic Turkish ethnicity. That is to say, former grievances are just one facet of the story; Kurdish migrants have encountered with new difficulties in the urban context. My Kurdish informants stated that all of them have experienced exclusion, discrimination, and exploitation processes in the city – for instance, they could not find decent housing, they have been discriminated in the job market or in the workplace. As much as the Kurdish informants compare their disadvantaged status with their Turkish counterparts in the urban capitalist relations, their perception of injustices has intensified. Therefore, the relative deprivation of the pro-HDP Kurds is inherently related to the new urban dimension of the Kurdish issue. In the interviews, Kurdish voters of the HDP reflect and articulate their past experience of violence, oppression, and trauma, along with their current feeling and experience of injustices. Many of them refer to some kind of "oppressed-class consciousness" and subaltern resistance.[160]

> When I look at Istanbul, I see that if a person earns three cents of ["*üç kuruş*"] money and buys an apartment or a car, he loses his personality and forgets his origins, his family and his party. Those rich [white] Turks forget where they came from. But we never forget our past and our struggle. We neither forget our mother and father, nor we do forget the lands we were born. It is always in our minds. It is in our minds when we are in bed, it is in our minds while we are working. Sometimes, for example, we are sitting here at the party office with friends, and we are dreaming: suppose that we are now in Tatvan, on the shore of the lake. There is the Sineğir mountain, there are plateaus and fountains, I wish we were there now. These dreams keep us alive.
>
> (Veysi 58, Tatvan, construction foreman)

Although the narrator of the above paragraph owns five apartments and earns an above-average wage in Bağcılar, he prefers to articulate his dissident political

[160] In Marxist perspective, under the capitalist system, the dominant bourgeoisie class dominate the consciousness of oppressed classes. I prefer to conceptualize "oppressed class consciousness" in reference to Marx's historical materialism; thus, I use it not only in *material* terms but also in *historical* terms. Marx argues that "this revolution is necessary, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew."

subjectivity with reference to the subaltern status of Kurdish migrants in the city. The communal grievances and political-economic injustices have led to the oppressed-class consciousness not only among Kurdish workers but also among the Kurdish middle-class. The Kurdish employers, for instance, are very aware of the capitalist inequalities and contradictions in which they are embedded today. DBP co-chairman of the district, Mustafa, summarizes his discontent as follows: "We were all workers 20 years ago, but now we are all employers. But nothing has actually changed in real terms. We are still exploited by the Turkish state and the existing capitalist system."

In a similar vein, a senior Kurdish activist, who served in the HDP's Bağcılar branch for several terms, attracted attention to various economic injustices the Kurds face in the city and stressed that "Kurds are shouldering a heavy burden in both real and abstract terms in comparison to Turks in Istanbul."[161] A young professional Kurdish activist, Dilan, (30, Bitlis, civil engineer) confirmed this argument and harshly criticizes discriminatory attitudes towards the Kurdish migrant workers as follows:

> I was doing a lot of [construction] site visits in my previous job. I heard a disappointing remark from the Turkish site chief in a meeting: There was a heavy operation ahead of us. During our planning of this labor-intensive task, the site chief said: 'Oh, okay, I'll find a couple of Kurds from there to do it.' [İK: What kind of job?] It might be a transportation operation. I didn't remember well but it may be about carrying some heavy load from one place to another, I don't know, maybe it's about paint and whitewash. You know, I didn't care about the exact operation, but I cared what I heard. When I heard this [discriminatory] remark, I immediately warned him harshly of course. As soon as he realized that I was Kurdish, I saw confusion and astonishment in his eyes. He didn't even know what to say. During this visit, my boss was also present there. But as an ex-pat, he did not understand anything, he looked surprised, as I was talking with the site chief in Turkish. Thereby, I expressed all my criticisms towards the site chief, and quite angrily I said that 'if you keep talking about your shitty ideas, I'll kill you next time.' I threatened him,

[161] In a recent book, Bilici (2018) conceptualizes the current status of Kurds through the metaphor of "hamal Kürt" (porter Kurd). Bilici argues that in the eyes of hegemonic Turkish ethnicity Kurds are expected to serve their own interests and general interests of *ummah*. He underlines the fact that current Turkish-Islamist government (AKP) employ Islamic brotherhood discourse to coopt Kurdish ethnic demands and suppress Kurds' political rights.

> really. I got out of the track. The site chief later came closer and apologized. I told him, 'Look, don't be sorry because I'm Kurdish. You shouldn't make an excuse because I'm Kurdish. You should be ashamed of yourself and you must be sorry for putting the Kurdish citizens into this status in your mind.' You know, there is this deep discrimination inside all Turks' minds.

This narrative, on the one hand, exemplifies the racist discrimination that Kurds experience in their everyday lives, and on the other hand, indicates Kurds' positioning at the bottom of urban capitalist hierarchies and their stigmatization with "lower job status" in the hegemonic Turkish-ethnic imaginary. Moreover, this narrative shows how a middle-class Kurdish engineer perceives a particular instance of everyday racism as "the relative deprivation" of her ethnic group, because the reaction of this Kurdish engineer is not directed towards everyday racism or that particular injustice, she clearly objects to the hierarchical ethnic divisions in the minds of Turkish people, which stigmatize Kurdish workers with lower status in the labor market – literally and figuratively with "the heavy loads" in this case. As it is seen in such encounters, reflection, mediation, and articulation of the relative deprivation become as much significant as the actual experience of discrimination and/or exclusion for the middle-class Kurdish people. These people perceive the relative deprivation of their group (Kurds) from a comparative perspective – in reference to the hegemonic Turkish ethnicity. In my fieldwork, I observed that the expressions of relative deprivation become especially vivid in the narratives of the young educated Kurdish professionals supporting the HDP.

Similar to Canan's and Dilan's narratives presented above, Behram's story shows the significance of the relative deprivation, as he portrayed himself as a Kurdish activist stuck between the burden of political activism and his professional-academic career. Behram, 35 years old, migrated from Şırnak to Istanbul with his family because of the burning down of their village during the 1990s. Behram

considered himself fortunate because he studied theology at university. Now, he works as a religion teacher at a private college and pursues a master's degree in sociology at a private university in Istanbul. He oversees electoral campaigns in three Bağcılar neighborhoods and responsible for the supervision of elections in 8 schools in Bağcılar. As many HDP activists in Bağcılar were arrested and put into prison after 2015, the workload of remaining activists outside like Behram has increased considerably. While Behram has kept insisting on his will for maintaining an academic career, some HDP executives suggested him postpone his personal dreams and ambitions for the time being and serve for the party as a "professional activist."

On a hot summer afternoon before the 2018 general elections, while I was chatting with Behram and a few young Kurdish activists on the terrace of the Bağcılar headquarters of the HDP, Behram started recounting a conversation he had had with his mother a couple of days ago. While they were watching news on TV, they heard a truck got into a severe accident and 15 people were killed in their hometown, Şırnak. His mother said, "My son, I wish they would have died just after the election because they might be our supporters [i.e. the HDP voters]". Behram laughed hysterically after this remark. He then stopped for a moment and told us, "supporting and voting for the party has become a matter of life and death for all Kurds." He underlined the fact that even a single vote becomes critical. Then, a young Kurdish woman who was listening to our conversation silently until that moment told us that she studies for the university entrance exams, and she is very afraid of not finding a job in the future if people find out that she supports the HDP. This young woman then told the story of her relative who had been accused of making "terrorist" propaganda and had recently been dismissed from teaching with a

government's decree. Behram told this young woman that, "we have prisons in our heads that we built ourselves, we must first liberate ourselves from our own prisons."

While he was enthusiastically continuing his speech, the HDP Bağcılar co-chairman Dilaver (*Başkan*) came and started to stand ahead of him. Suddenly, Başkan interrupted Behram's speech and asked him whether he has completed the poster work on his election site. Behram turned towards me and cynically told: "You see, comrade İbrahim, this is the glorious HDP we are just talking about! From Başkan's pressure, you can understand why some Kurds leave out party and support the AKP." By looking at me, he continued his cynical criticism of Başkan. Later, Behram directly told Başkan that it is the party administration that is responsible for these kinds of campaign works, and he must take his own responsibility and put those posters in the neighborhoods. Başkan became truly angry at Behram: "You're not helpful. I did not want to hurt your feelings in front of our comrades, but you make me say it. You have never peed on a wounded finger ("*yaralı parmağa işemek*") until now. You always run away from responsibilities." Behram continued his complaints in response and told that he has been working very hard for the party recently, he was tired of running for every operation, he could not spare any time for writing his master's thesis and he remained behind all of his classmates. Başkan seemed disappointed and made a final remark: "What the hell! Apparently, your thesis is more important than our struggle."

This encounter clearly exemplifies the relative deprivation of upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments. Some HDP officials considered following a personal career in times of urgent crisis as a very selfish act, because the Kurdish political movement is under great pressure, as hundreds of the politicians and party activists are in prison – their collective freedom is in fact in danger. There is a little space left

for the organization of the HDP at the local level by the AKP after the closure of "the peace talks," such that the pro-AKP local government and security forces hardly gave any permission to party activities over the Bağcılar space. However, for some Kurdish activists remaining outside, whose burden has been multiplied in the last years, their relative deprivation from particular resources –in this case, the master's education, a distinctive form of cultural capital– is a serious issue. This condition is especially relevant for the Kurdish middle-class supporters of HDP.

It is necessary to recognize that, in spite of the large scale proletarianization of Kurdish migrants in the urban context, some Kurdish segments have been able to achieve upward mobility thanks to the family- and kin-based solidarity, the urbanization experience, increased educational opportunities and informal economic activities in urban setting in the last decades. The extent of skilled-workers and educated professional class (the emerging middle-class) have increased among the second-generation Kurdish migrants. For these groups, the feeling and perception of (relative) deprivation is as much as significant as the actual (observable) deprivation, because they believe that they (i.e. Kurdish community) are treated unequally and unjustly, they do not have what they deserve.

6.2.2 Articulation of the grievances in the counter-hegemonic party space

It is discussed that the pro-HDP Kurds' perception of relative deprivation is closely related with their past experiences of violence and oppression in their hometowns, on the one hand, and their current experiences of inequalities and injustices in the city, on the other hand. These experiences have often translated into collective grievances over time. In order to investigate and understand the meaning of Kurdish collective

grievances, I will explore the injured or traumatized memory of the dissident Kurds, who predominantly supports the HDP today, in this section.

In the interviews I observed that reconstructing injured or traumatized memories and recalling past sufferings determine the Kurdish voters' current positive attitudes towards the contentious movement-party. It is necessary to recognize that on the one hand the party platforms provide a significant medium for the articulation of memories of violence, sufferings and resistance of the past, and on the other hand the reproduction of dissident Kurdish political subjectivity. The HDP functions as counter-hegemonic space for the dissident Kurds to articulate their grievances and reproduce their (ethnonational) identity. In the HDP offices in Bağcılar, Kurdish voters often talk about past experiences of violence and oppression, current political pressures, economic difficulties, and their party's politics. During my fieldwork, I noticed that the Kurdish voters often visit the party offices for socializing with their fellows having similar experiences. In many interviews, the Kurdish voters supporting the HDP portrayed the party as a "safe haven" or "free space" in political terms (Polleta, 1999).

> When we migrated to the city, nobody looked after us. Everyone considered us as terrorists, they often directly called us terrorists. Only this party has approached us and took care of us with benevolence.
>
> (Veysi, 58, Tatvan, construction foreman)

> In the past, there was no other institution but the party where we could go and apply. There was no place to express ourselves, to express our grievances. People were coming to the party again and again. For example, the pro-systemic groups [i.e. Turks] were looking at us as terrorists, they were despising and excluding us, they didn't rent their apartments to us. They perceived us as extensions of terrorism as if we were involved in terrorism as if we all supported terrorist activities. That's why our people turn towards the party, the solidarity emerged within the party circles.
>
> (Abdullah, 55, Bitlis, worker in the hardware sector)

> I was 13 when our village was burned down. I'm 38 now. I still remember everything clearly when I go to the village. My childhood was there; I still

> dream of my village. I meet my childhood friends here at the party headquarters, sometimes we tell each other our good childhood memories.
> (Seyfi, Bitlis, 38, shopkeeper)

Especially for the first-generation Kurdish migrants, the pro-Kurdish political parties provided a communal-solidarity space where they can heal their traumatized memory. The first-generation Kurdish migrants involved in the contentious movement-party by recalling the past through pain, grief, nostalgia, and resistance in the party spaces. Nevertheless, for all pro-HDP Kurds, the party function as a meeting and socialization ground, both in literal and figurative terms, where they speak their own language, share their political views, narrate their past sufferings and current difficulties, and reproduce their ethnic-national identity. It is likely to assert that the HDP platforms/offices perform as a "free space" or a counter-hegemonic public space where Kurdish voters reconstruct their dissident subjectivities and ameliorate their past sufferings through contentious discourses. The construction of counter-hegemonic public space is an integral part of the making of the HDP today.

Through my participant observations, I realized that the Kurdish electorate not only visit the HDP offices in the election periods but throughout the year. There are hundreds of visitors each and every day; the party headquarters and offices are very crowded especially on the weekends. When they have free time, instead of going to a café or coffeehouse, Kurdish voters frequently visit the party headquarters and offices to have a quick chat or asking for advice. Some Kurdish activists whom I had offered to do interviews in public places –such as cafés or coffeehouses– often told me that they wanted to meet in the party headquarters' terrace because of the fact that they feel more comfortable there. In the kitchen of the HDP Bağcılar headquarters, there is always hot-brewed tea on the stove, one of the executives of the district is responsible for the kitchen and brewing tea each day; this responsible-

person serves tea to each and every guest, then at the end of the day the whole office is cleaned by the very same person, because the party does not have a paid professional cleaner or office worker. Moreover, there is a large meeting hall in the district headquarters which is used for the party congress and meeting and the condolence ceremonies. Almost every weekend, “a guerrilla funeral” from the district or from the nearby districts is brought to the hall. On these occasions, the *meles* say Kurdish prayers, and sometimes read Quran aloud in these ceremonies.

In my interviews in the HDP offices, most Kurdish informants directly attributed their dissident identities to their own experience of state violence in the 1990s. Some of them decided to become “revolutionaries” because of experiencing or witnessing violence. Those informants who are old enough clearly describe the war environment in the 1980s and 1990s: commando raids, burning down of the villages and houses, evacuation of villages and towns, unidentified murders, and the notorious military perpetrators, etc. These violent and oppressive measures clearly injured and traumatized their memories and led to the collective grievances. Even those young informants who have not been subject to war, violence, and the forced migration first hand share the burden of this collective grievance. Nevertheless, it is necessary to underline that the Kurdish voters’ narration of grievances is not uniform, instead, their narratives are mixed with a lot of different emotions. Trauma, melancholia, and longing have been intertwined with the resistance moments in the narratives of the pro-HDP Kurds. While speaking about the forced migration story in the 1990s, suddenly, the informants began to narrate the beautiful days of their childhood, their love and longing for their homelands. As a matter of fact, Göral (2016) emphasizes that the mixture of feelings of grievance, mourning, melancholy and resistance constitute the Kurdish political subjectivity in the urban context.

Therefore, the Kurdish voters do not recall the past through the position of victimization; instead, they became resilient and adopted dissident perspectives owing to these past sufferings and traumas. After explaining his story of forced migration, Mesut (45, Bitlis, worker) stressed that,

> Despite all these difficulties, you cannot guess how hard we have worked in this city. Indeed, all our people have worked extremely hard. We came here, we settled here, and now here we are, we have never given up for a moment. Because we have always remembered our struggle.

This brief narrative shows how the Kurdish collective grievances are mixed with resistance ("hard work"). It is seen that the Kurdish voters' traumatic but resilient experiences of the past constitute the basis of their current political opposition and enable them to identify with the HDP in the urban context. In other words, similar to the previous relative deprivation discussion, the experience and perception of injustice have led to the participation in the contentious movement. The collective grievances have triggered the contentious movement-party.

Most Kurdish informants supporting the HDP believe that their current relative deprivation in the city is causally related to their previous experiences of oppression and violence back then in their homelands. They believe that the state's oppressive and violent measures towards the ordinary Kurdish villagers in the region in the 1980s and 1990s left their communities unprotected. Feeling very insecure, they had no chance but to migrate to the Western Turkey. For a long time, the Kurdish migrant lived in poor conditions in the deprived and/or peripheral areas of metropolises. In this context, it is necessary to remember that the anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist articulations of the Kurdish movement had a great resonance with the poor living conditions of Kurdish migrants and captured their everyday sentiments. Starting from the 1990s onwards, the pro-Kurdish parties' emphasis on the authoritarian-capitalist nature of the Turkish state has also become influential on

the mobilization of Kurdish migrants. To put it another way, the Kurdish subalterns made sense of the multiple social exclusions that they faced in the city via the anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist articulations of the pro-Kurdish parties. Especially, for the Kurdish informal proletariat, their encounters, and conversations in the party's "free spaces" became helpful in terms of understanding the exploitative capitalist relations in the urban scene.

6.2.3 Resistance Frameworks of the HDP

At this juncture, it is necessary to remark that grievances do not automatically transform into the contentious politics; for collective mobilization, the contentious movement-party must provide strong and captivating discursive frameworks. The Kurdish movement and the HDP have played an active role in the political mobilization of discontent and reconstruction of dissident subjectivity among the Kurdish electorate from past to present. The Kurdish movement has developed a large repertoire of resistance in the last 30 years (Güneş, 2013b). During participant observation in the HDP's headquarters in Bağcılar, I noticed that the contentious movement-party incessantly try to keep the traces and moments of the Kurdish resistance repertoire alive in the collective memory of the Kurdish voters. The movement-party in Bağcılar actively reconstructs the resistance symbols, figures and experiences, and by this way, reproduces the deep-rooted grievances and maintains collective action among the Kurdish participants. During the fieldwork, I realized that the opening ceremonies of almost all the party meetings and activities begin with "one minute's silence for the Kurdish martyrs." All over the walls of the party headquarters, there are dozens of posters, photographs and pictures of the "legendary" leaders and fighters of the Kurdish movement, who were "fallen down

on the way of revolution," such as Mazlum Doğan, Mahsum Korkmaz, Sakine Cansız, Arin Mirkan, Ivana Hoffman, etc. In the headquarters, one could easily notice the stickers, graffiti and posters that are directly related to the historiography of the Kurdish movement. These symbols clearly aim to remind the persistence of Kurdish resistance and revolutionary struggle to the visitors.

In a closed meeting where the HDP neighborhood activists came together before the elections in June 2018, the DBP[162] Bağcılar co-chairman Mustafa (42, Tatvan, textile workshop owner) told that, despite the accelerating pressures of the AKP, they resisted much more challenging conditions in the 1990s. He stressed that the task of the party activists today is "to maintain the spirit of resistance" that started in the 1980s and "to raise the struggle for peace and democracy to a higher level." Mustafa continued his speech by commemorating Orhan Doğan, one of the legendary figures of the Kurdish movement in the 1990s:

> Orhan Doğan was one of the most important historical figures of our struggle. We need to understand and recite the life of Orhan Doğan among our community. The comrade Orhan never acknowledged the oppression of the Turkish state towards our people, he was dismissed from the parliament for rebelling against the oppressors in their own field, and consequently, he was arrested and imprisoned. He spent almost ten years in jail for his resistance. After the prison years, while he was conducting party campaigns, he died because of a heart attack due to stress. He never stopped for a moment. You know, Orhan comrade was unstoppable. Our political martyrs raised such struggle in the past. Today, our party chairman Selahattin Demirtaş is in prison for not obeying the oppressors, he directly said that 'we will not make you president [to Erdoğan].' These comrades are our fortune; these are successful examples. It is now in our hands to continue and raise this struggle.

In my interviews with the party chairpersons and activists, almost all of them preferred to start talking about the history of the Kurdish movement and resistance. Some of the veteran activists whom I interviewed said that they were directly involved in "the organized struggle" in the past. Only in the second half of the

[162] DBP is the sister party organization HDP.

interviews, or sometimes in the second interviews, they expressed their own experiences and life stories. Most Kurdish executives and activists stated that they had family members and relatives who had joined the insurgency and either arrested or killed by the military-security forces as a result. Their own life stories have developed in parallel with the ups and downs of the Kurdish movement; often there is little space left for the private issues in their everyday lives, most of them stated that they spare all their free time (except work hours) to the movement-party. "In order to protest to the isolation of Öcalan," a group of Kurdish executives and activists of the BDP participated in a nation-wide hunger strike in the early 2010s and lost their health with such consequences as vision disturbances, neural and gastrointestinal disorders, etc. Long-lasting traces of Kurdish resistance have been carved out on their bodies and souls.

The HDP's organization in Bağcılar is a reflection and projection of the Kurdish movement. For instance, like other branches and previous pro-Kurdish parties, they give special importance to "the value families" in its local organization. The value families connote the Kurdish families who lost their children on the mountains in the ranks of the PKK. Through this reference, the Kurdish community commemorate "the Kurdish martyrs," as they believe that "their children turned into values by becoming martyrs for the freedom of the Kurdish nation." Therefore, HDP pays special attention to the representation of the value families in the local and national levels. In numerous interviews, the HDP executives and activists in Bağcılar emphasized the fact that their movement-party is not new; it has a long tradition of resistance. Especially, their emphasis on "the uninterrupted resistance" against the state oppression can be interpreted as the continuation of Kurdish political tradition at the local level.

From this discussion, we can argue that the HDP is an organic part and projection of the Kurdish movement in general. The resistance repertoires of the Kurdish movement from past to present are adopted by the local organization of HDP in Bağcılar. These frames are very captivating for the Kurdish voters. The HDP as a contentious movement-party successfully provides a medium for the articulation of collective Kurdish grievances and taps on the sentiments of the dissident Kurdish community. The party offices and headquarters function as "free spaces" or "counter-hegemonic public spaces" for the political socialization and the formation of dissident Kurdish identity. In the next section, I will discuss the pro-Kurdish space-making practices in Bağcılar, and how these practices mobilize the Kurdish electorate on the ground.

6.3 Space-making

6.3.1 Pro-Kurdish space-making in everyday life in Bağcılar

Apart from the HDP's provision of "free spaces" for the articulation of Kurdish grievances and discontent, it is possible to maintain that the Kurdish community (supporting the movement-party) have already imprinted their presence all over the district space long ago. Starting from the late 1980s onwards, Kurdish migrant communities have settled in the urban peripheries of Istanbul, which are sometimes called "Kurdish ghettos" and "Kurdish neighborhoods." For example, Demirkapı neighborhood in Bağcılar, Kanarya neighborhood in Küçükçekmece, Yakacık ("Siirtians") neighborhood in Maltepe are well known with the strong Kurdish presence. Cevat, the HDP's ex-co-chairperson in Bağcılar, outlined the spatial concentration of particular Kurdish communities over Istanbul's districts as follows: Mardin Kurds settled in Küçükçekmece, Batman Kurds in Güngören, Siirt Kurds in

Fatih and Aksaray, Hakkari Kurds in Sefaköy, Mardin and Van Kurds in Kumkapı, Alevi Kurds (probably from Dersim) in Esenyurt, Bitlis Kurds in Bağcılar.[163]

Kurdish migration to Bağcılar and other Istanbul districts did not necessarily follow the chain-migration pattern, because most of the Kurdish peasants were forced to evacuate their hometowns and villages in a relatively short period of time in the 1980s and 1990s. Therefore, as one might easily guess, Kurdish migrants settled in Istanbul not because of pull factors but push factors: forced migration policy, escalating violence, insecure environment, and dissolution of rural subsistence with the low-intensity war. Nonetheless, it is possible to maintain that Kurdish migrants settled in Istanbul in massive clustering pattern. In the case of Kurdish migrants in Mersin, Yılmaz (2014) argues that the ethnic migrants settled into particular urban localities (e.g. the Akdeniz district) in a concentrated manner (Yılmaz 2014). Notwithstanding the suddenness of their migration, Kurdish migrants still tried to use their family and kinship contacts/references, which are indeed based on their place of origin, for settling different urban districts and neighborhoods. Most of my Kurdish informants declare that they preferred to settle in Bağcılar in order to be close with their community and relatives.[164]

As it is stated earlier, the communal, familial and kinship bonds are very influential on the political preferences (see Canan's narrative). With his/her dominant political views, a family or kin member could easily determine the political preferences of other members. For instance, Tezcür (2016) argues that the

[163] Likewise, Perouse (2016) argues that each district of the Istanbul metropolis has a different Kurdish profile: "The foremost Kurdish province of origin in the breakdown of the general population varies accordingly: it is the Adıyaman province (7,4 % of registered persons in the area who were born outside of Istanbul) in the Sultangazi district; Bingöl (4,1 %) in the Sultanbeyli district; Ardahan (7,4 %) in the Esenyurt district; Muş (5,4 %) in the Arnavutköy district; Mardin (6,5 %) in the Zeytinburnu district; Malatya (6,3 %), Bitlis (5,4 %) and Igdir (5,1 %) in the Basaksehir district."

[164] In the Bağcılar Municipality Survey in 2006, 55 percent of all Bağcılar dwellers declare that they prefer the district because their jobs/workshops are located there, 49 percent declare that they prefer the district because their relatives and kin members are also living in the district.

participation of a family/kin member in the Kurdish insurgency often influence the decisions of other members in family/kinship networks in favor of the Kurdish movement and the pro-Kurdish voting. In this context, the communal, familial and kinship-based settlement of the Kurdish migrants in particular districts and neighborhoods –which, I prefer to call "the spatial concentration of the Kurdish communities"– have led to a positive spillover effect on the pro-Kurdish political preference. The everyday Kurdish space-making in this sense create both the communal belonging and political preference in Bağcılar.

During the interviews and daily conversations, some Kurdish informants point out to the fact that they established their own "ghettos" in Bağcılar.[165] The conditions of spatial concentration – or the Kurdish/communal ghettos– have not only produced identical political attitudes but also produced material advantages for the Kurdish migrants. In other words, the spatial concentration of Kurdish communities has created specialized occupation zones, particular employment opportunities, informal economic resources and solidarity networks among Kurdish migrants all over Istanbul. For instance, by reiterating the clichés about the Kurdish groups and employment types nexus, Cevat underlined that most coachmen in Büyükada are the Kurdish migrants of Van origin, who formed a monopoly in the horse-drawn carriage business long ago, and most of the peddlers selling stuffed-mussels in Beyoğlu and other central districts are Kurdish migrants of Mardin origin, who were specialized in this business thanks to their cooperation with the Armenian minority in Istanbul. According to Cevat, some Kurdish communities have

[165] The ghettos in Bağcılar are not like the American ghettos, where the processes of urban desolation, racial segregation, social deprivation, and street violence are concentrated. Although Kurdish migrants and other ethnic-kinship communities have concentrated in the particular neighborhoods, all neighborhoods of Bağcılar have still mixed populations. In addition, there is a variety of formal and informal ways of dealing with poverty, and upward social mobility is to some extent possible in the Bağcılar's communal ghettos. Therefore, I prefer to call them "communal ghettos."

established monopoly over minibus ("*dolmuş*") lines, opened chains of textile workshops in cooperation, helped each other in the restaurant-café business. The largest community dwelling in Bağcılar, today, is the Kurds of Bitlis origin, whose spatial concentration in the district has clearly provided them a comparative economic advantage in the textile sector. It is not unusual to see a Bitlisian Kurd could easily find manual jobs in the dozens of workshops belonging to their relatives and kin members. Textile employers of Bitlis origin could hand some of their operations to their fellows in order to help and prosper their business. As Cevat underlined, another crowded community in the district is the Kurds of Siirt origin, who are specialized in the bazaar business and used to work in the wholesale vegetable market in Bayrampaşa, next to Bağcılar.

Nonetheless, the spatial concentration of Kurdish communities has also some disadvantages. It brings the spatial stigmatization of Kurds in districts and neighborhoods – presumably, in the eyes of the dominant Turkish ethnicity. "Kurdish neighborhoods" and "Kurdish ghettos" are especially stigmatized with "terror" and "drug use." Kurdish community in Bağcılar has been able to overcome this stigmatization, first, by strengthening and reproducing their communal bonds, and second, by reconstructing dissident subjectivities. For instance, despite the fact that the Kurdish populated Demirkapı neighborhood is stigmatized with frequent "terror" operations and lynching incidents, the spatial stigma of "being Kurd" dialectically makes the dwellers, especially Kurdish youth, proud of their ethnopolitical and communal identities. Especially, in these stigmatized spaces, Kurds' identification with the Kurdish movement (and their embracement of anti-systemic ideologies) make them feel prouder and more confident about their Kurdishness. In this sense, the Kurdish community in Bağcılar is much more resistant compared to the Black

"underclass" in American hyper-ghettos (Wacquant, 2008). In many interviews, upwardly-mobile Kurdish working-class in Bağcılar articulate their ethnic (Kurdishness) and class (working-class) identities through resistant and revolutionary discourses. It is possible to say that being proud of Kurdishness is about the phenomenon of "*bedel*" (value), the result of 30 years-long political mobilization and efforts of the Kurdish movement to produce the dignity of ethnic Kurdish identity.[166]

In addition, the dissident Kurdish voters supporting the HDP stated that they are able to overcome "Turkish racism," in their own words, by creating solidarity economies for their fellows in their own ghettos. For instance, extensive ethnic- and kinship-based employment regimes in some pro-Kurdish workshops, cafes and restaurants provide a basis for communitarian capitalism in the district. Their spatial concentration and communal existence have heightened the density of their networks and interactions and facilitated the production of social capital, which overall presumably transform into the informal economic activities, transactions, and resources within the Kurdish community. However, it is necessary to discern that the condition of spatial concentration neither brings total ethnic solidarity and cooperation nor smooth and peaceful cohabitation necessarily. There are, of course, conflicting interests within the dissident Kurdish community in the district. Despite these pitfalls, the Kurdish community have re-appropriated urban space and reconstruct their communal ties over space, which after all facilitated the political mobilization of the Kurdish movement-party. In this sense, there is a reciprocal relationship between the pro-Kurdish space-making and pro-Kurdish political mobilization.

[166] For a detailed discussion on *bedel* and dignity in the Kurdish context, see (Darıcı and Neyzi, 2015)

At this juncture, it is also necessary to look into the dynamics of everyday Kurdish space-making more closely. Bağcılar neighborhoods are not ethnically homogeneous but quite mixed. However, despite some conflicts, different ethnic and sectarian groups (Kurds, Turks, Syrians, Afghans, Caferis, Alevites, Sunnis, etc.) have continued living in the same neighborhoods until recently. Although there is no visible sign of a structure of hierarchy (or divisions) of ethnicities over neighborhoods of the district, there is a tacit agreement between the ethnic groups on the invisible boundaries. For instance, the latest Syrian and Afghan migrants, who have settled in Bağcılar in the 2010s, are at the bottom of the spatial hierarchies; their mobility are seriously restricted to particular streets and neighborhoods by other groups. Syrians and Afghans have been employed in the most unwanted jobs and could hardly find decent apartments –even in the basement– in the central neighborhoods. If one of the ethnic actors attempt to break "the unwritten rules" of the spatial hierarchy in the neighborhoods, a large ethnic conflict might erupt, and existing ethnic tensions might easily transform into massive lynching incidents. Thereby, every ethnic group marks their own territory – e.g. Shiite Turks there, Shaafi Kurds here. During my fieldwork, especially between 2015 and 2016, when the AKP shifted towards Turkish nationalism and the clashes between the ISIS and YPG in Rojava escalated, the dissident Kurdish community were lynched several times by the Turkish nationalist group. A Kurdish informant in the neighborhood of Siirtians in Maltepe expressed the violence exerted upon the Kurdish community as follows:

> When we first came to this neighborhood, we encountered with all sorts of outrage and bullying. We lived those days when they said, 'killing a Kurd is a good deed' ("*Kürt öldürmek sevaptır*"). In our neighborhood, AKP want to create its own Kurds, while MHP wants all Kurds to be dead. Every actor who came to local power wanted to buy us [i.e Kurdish votes]. However, we have dignity. They cannot oblige Kurds to 'ghetto' life. This is disgraceful.

> Although the only solution is brotherhood/sisterhood, both the police and the intelligence stir up discrimination. They attempted to lynch us several times in the center of Yakacık. They tried to put red signs on our houses, works places and shops. That is what racists and Nazis did in the past (Demir, 2010).

In my interviews, some Kurdish activists and voters of the HDP argued that they are really disturbed by the Turkish nationalist groups, especially those with the Blacksea origin, in particular zones of Bağcılar. Likewise, most of the interviewees refer to "friendly" and "enemy" neighborhoods in the district. During my participant observations, I realized that the party activists use the rhetoric of "our neighborhood" and "the fascist neighborhood" quite often in order to mark a Kurdish-friendly spatial setting. As a matter of fact, it is the Kurdish movement-party that use such spatial-discursive markers to specify the favorable or adverse setting for its organization. The existence of "adverse" settings shows that there are some specific informal boundaries and unwritten rules that that the Kurdish movement-party cannot bypass on the ground.

It is quite interesting to see that almost all Kurdish activists and voters of the HDP whom I interviewed refer to Demirkapı as "our neighborhood," which is indeed the stronghold of the HDP according to the recent election results. Located in the middle of Bağcılar, Demirkapı is densely populated by the forced migrants. Like other Bağcılar neighborhoods, Demirkapı is characterized by narrow streets, attached buildings and inadequate physical infrastructure; poverty and deprivation have existed in a concentrated manner. Kurdish activists stated that their movement has been active in the neighborhood for more than 20 years. Likewise, most Kurdish voters stated that they "feel at home" in the neighborhood. Some pro-HDP Kurdish youth dwelling in Demirkapı claimed that they successfully prevented the penetration of Turkish nationalists into their neighborhood until recently. In the interviews, the politicized Kurdish youth overtly asserted that this neighborhood is

under their own control. I witnessed that the HDP could easily organize various party events and meetings in Demirkapı with the mobilization of hundreds of Kurdish voters just in a few hours. Nevertheless, despite the hegemony of the movement-party at the local level, the neighborhood is not homogeneous. In addition to the Kurdish movement, other political groups – such as Islamic communities, tariqats and radical Islamists – have continued to exist in the neighborhood. Some informants attracted attention to the recently emerging conflicts in Demirkapı. A passionate Kurdish activist, Sedat (33, Bitlis, a textile worker), who has been living in the neighborhood for more than 20 years, recounted a minor conflict he experienced recently.

While Sedat was posting the HDP stickers (as part of the election campaign) at an entrance door of an apartment building in Demirkapı, a young Kurdish girl approached him and said, "You can't put the stickers here, this is our apartment." "Who are you," Sedat replied, "I understand that you reside in this building. But this is our neighborhood, sister. You are telling me that I can't post in my own place. If you don't like living in this neighborhood, then you should leave." As the girl attempted to stop him, Sedat continued to quarrel with the girl: "Let's visit all apartments in this building. If they are all on your side, then you're right, I'll stop posting stickers. But even if there is one HDP family inside this building, then you must shut up." Later, the girl's mother got involved in the quarrel from the balcony on an upper floor. Sedat criticized to the girl's mother harshly:

> I believe it is you, the family, who has corrupted your girl's character. Look, madam, we lived peacefully in this neighborhood until today. We've never tried to put pressure on you because of your ideas or beliefs, but now as the government backed up the fascists, you're trying to stop us. This is not a coincidence. You're trying to provoke us.

Sedat told that he got really angry with “those rightist Kurds” dwelling in the neighborhoods. By taking the political power behind their backs, they now attempt to dominate the neighborhood. Although this encounter involves some conflict, it still shows that Demirkapı is still the stronghold of the pro-Kurdish organization. Especially Sedat’s self-confidence and overt-declaration of their power and control over the neighborhood are clear manifestations of the pro-Kurdish space-making.

Another epitome during my fieldwork which clearly illustrates the influence of pro-Kurdish space-making in Demirkapı, has occurred during the election period: After the June 2018 elections, by sending cell-phone messages to all registered voters in Bagcilar, the HDP requested from its members and voters not to go out on the streets at night after the party’s electoral success in order to avoid potential conflicts. Despite its attempt to smooth the existing ethnic tension, the party could not stop the Kurdish youth in Demirkapı. Some Kurdish youth of Demirkapı did not respect the party’s request. After midnight, they went out and lit torches on the streets of the neighborhood. Due to the strong presence of Kurdish youth on the streets of Demirkapı, the AKP crowd could not enter the neighborhood in order to celebrate their electoral victory. Some minor clashes emerged between both sides without any injury. In the meantime, I was on the Bağcılar streets to observe political climate and potential conflicts in this election night; I witnessed first hand that some partisans of the AKP were celebrating wildly – by sometimes blocking traffic and firing guns – in central Bağcılar neighborhoods, which would have presumably triggered the Kurdish youth to mobilize at night. The next day, I noticed that the HDP executives of the district were upset by the rebellious attitudes of the Kurdish youth of Demirkapı. They stated that the Kurdish youth of Demirkapi had conducted similar protests and adopted rebellious attitudes towards the party decisions in the previous elections.

As a matter of fact, during a political rally in the Demirkapı neighborhood that I attended in 2015, the HDP administration again strongly requested the Kurdish youth to be calm down during the rally and get back to their homes quietly afterward, because they had wanted to secure the rallying crowd from the potential brutality of the police forces. However, the Kurdish youth of the neighborhood did not pay attention to this request during this rally, intervened in the speeches through their loud slogans[167] and revolutionary anthems, and then started to march towards other neighborhoods after the rally. From these encounters, one may argue that sometimes the Kurdish youth of the neighborhood act much more radical than the HDP organization in the district.

As seen in these encounters, the pro-Kurdish space-making activity is not homogenous. In addition, it is not only relevant for Demirkapı, but its repercussions are also evident in all other neighborhoods of Bağcılar. For instance, there are dozens of pro-Kurdish cafes and coffeehouses where predominantly pro-HDP Kurds and leftists hang around, socialize, and play cards in other neighborhoods. The workplaces of the Kurdish "patriotic" tradesmen (such as groceries, barbershops, and real estate offices) sometimes function as informal socialization spaces for pro-HDP Kurds. However, it is also necessary to underline that pro-Kurdish space-making is not an absolute process, its intensity and depth depend on the political conjecture as well as the HDP's mobilization capacity on the ground. In a private conversation, the HDP co-chairman Dilaver (*Başkan*) said that they used to be very organized in Çakmak neighborhood (located in the southern axis of Bağcılar, adjacent to Haznedar-Güngören) and used to receive huge electoral support in the recent past. However, the electoral support has decreased quite recently. Dilaver commented that

[167] For example, they shout, "Fascism will be buried in Kurdistan" and "Biji Berxwedana Kobane."

> Due to the withdrawal of the Kurdish youth from this neighborhood with the recent wave of political arrests, the neighborhood has fallen down. And now the radical Islamists groups such as Nusra and ISIS began to be organized in the streets of Çakmak.

As it is seen in this remark, pro-Kurdish space-making and the HDP's mobilization on the ground are processes that construct and maintain each other. Pro-Kurdish-space making is not significant only for the mobilization of the electorate but the reproduction of the party organization and identity.

6.3.2 Spatial re-appropriation of Islam in Bağcılar

Apart from spatial concentration and communal settlement of Kurds, the most vivid example of the pro-Kurdish space-making in Bağcılar is the pro-Kurdish Shafi'i masjids, which is directly affiliated with the HDP today. The Kurdish movement supported the establishment of the pro-Kurdish masjids in Bağcılar in the late 1990s and 2000s. Many Kurdish informants reported that there are 4 pro-Kurdish masjids in the district, which are located in Demirkapı, Fatih and Göztepe neighborhoods. The most famous pro-Kurdish masjids are *Bilal Habeşi Mescidi* and *Melamemedin Mescidi*. The pro-Kurdish imams (*mele*s, the traditional Kurdish Islamic scholars) of these masjids were educated in the traditional madrasas in the Kurdish populated eastern and southeastern provinces. They declare their Kurdish ethnic identity openly and without hesitation. In those masjids, sermons, prayers, and speeches are performed in the Kurdish language, which make pious Kurds comfortable and "feel at home." The pious Kurdish supporters of the HDP said that they had left praying in the Diyanet mosques long ago, because they felt alienated in the face of the Turkish nationalist propaganda and the state-centric discourses. Likewise, some Kurdish-Islamist supporters of the HDP asserted that the "official" mosques always propagate for "the capitalist Turkish state" and serve for legitimating and naturalizing its

oppressive-authoritarian measures. These pious and Islamist-Kurdish voters defended the necessity of the pro-Kurdish Shafi'i masjids, which provide "alternative" and "free spaces" for worshipping and socialization. As much as the AKP and the Diyanet mosques have turned towards the Turkish nationalism in the last decade, these pro-Kurdish masjids and the *mele*s have become influential on pious and Islamist Kurdish electorate in the district. Nevertheless, some of Kurdish informants suggested that the structural inequalities and discriminations the Kurdish community had faced in the past led to the establishment of these masjids.

> All of my relatives are pious. They pray five times a day and fast for thirty days in Ramadan, but today none of them go to the Diyanet mosques even for Friday prayers. They criticize the AKP's Islamism and Diyanet for deceiving Kurds. Therefore, if they go to the prayer, of course, they prefer our own masjids. There is a masjid of *Melekemini* (?) in my neighborhood [Fatih], or there is this famous *Bilal Habeşi mosque*, which has Kurdish *mele* of Van origin. In our masjids, our *mele*s emphasize not only Islamic principles and after-life, but also the current social, political and economic issues. In their speeches, especially, they stress the need for social peace. This contrasts with the state-led Islamic understanding. Diyanet always deceive Muslim people by telling them that the rewards and punishments of this world wait them in after life. So, there are no worries for this world.
>
> (Zana, 30, Diyarbakır, construction foreman)

> In particular, during the 1990s, they [i.e. the Diyanet officials] did not allow our funerals, they kept our dead bodies wait outside, so we had to establish our own masjids. Before that, it was not possible for us to perform funeral ceremonies for our martyrs. As a matter of fact, they even did not allow our [i.e. Kurdish community] normal funerals in the past. There was such huge discrimination. They did not tolerate us because they believed we are terrorists. There is also another reason: Shafii imams make *niyyah* [i.e. the intention for *Salah*] for all four Sunni sects, not only for themselves. So, the Shafi'i's *niyyah* is open to everyone from all Islamic sects, but there is no such thing [i.e. open invitation] in the Hanafi sect. Furthermore, there are other [cultural] differences: Shafi'is lift their fingers during the *tahiyyat* prayer. If a Kurdish Shafi'i in the mosque had lifted their fingers during the *tahiyyat* prayer, some Hanafites would have immediately reacted, 'why did you do that, aren't you Muslim?' There are such significant differences.[168]
>
> (Bedri, 50, Van, *mele/seyda*)

[168] According to the Shafii sect, during the *tahiyyat* prayer, moving the index finger upwards is the Sunnah of the Prophet whereas for the Hanafi's this practice is not part of Sunnah and thus inappropriate.

These masjids are clear manifestations of the pro-Kurdish space-making led by the movement-party in Bağcılar. The Kurdish movement does not only maintain a critical discursive strategy by developing "the democratic Islam paradigm" on the national level, but also provide the necessary alternative (physical and symbolic) mediums at the local level. Through this spatial strategy, the movement-party has been able to attract religious Kurdish segments in the last decade. It is necessary to remark that, not only the pro-HDP Kurds but also other religious-conservative Kurdish groups, even sometimes those supporters of the AKP, visit these masjids because they want to hear the prayers and sermons in Kurdish language and see their relatives who regularly attend prayers there. In this sense, these masjids produce both the counter-hegemonic Islamic interpretations and alternative communal belonging for the Kurdish electorate. During my fieldwork, I noticed that, Kurdish *mele*s together with some pious Kurdish community move back and forth between the party headquarters/offices and these masjids, and by this way, a cultural (everyday) affinity between the party and the religious-conservative Kurdish segments are established in Bağcılar. Sometimes, the party's space itself turns into a religious space, especially, during the funerals and the condolence ceremonies in the headquarters, in which the Kurdish *mele*s perform the Islamic prayers for decedents.

In parallel with the introduction of "the democratic Islam" paradigm by the Kurdish movement (Çiçek, 2016), a religious-oriented transformation has been realized in the HDP's local organization and everyday representations in Bağcılar. The Kurdish movement's articulation of an alternative or heterodox understanding of Islam (the tradition of "the oppressed" Muslims) aimed to replace the religious linkages the AKP had established with the poor religious-conservative electorate. Along with the macro-transformation, Islamic knowledge has been radically

interpreted and articulated by the HDP's local Islamic intermediaries – the local *mele*s. In the recent period, there are two significant developments in the district: first, a series of Democratic Islamic Congress meetings were organized and moderated by the HDP's Bağcılar branch, and second, the funeral ceremonies ("*taziye*s") of the Kurdish "martyrs" who fought in the ranks of the Kurdish movement against the ISIS were performed in the HDP headquarters in Bağcılar. These are critical moments in the convergence of religious and ethnopolitical identities in the case of the HDP.

As a matter of fact, ethnic and religious identities had been intertwined with each other in the historical construction of Kurdishness in Turkey (Olson, 2013; Bruinessen, 1992). In retrospect, famous Kurdish religious figures (such as Sheikh Said and Said Nursi, whom claimed the national rights of the Kurdish minority and had been punished severely by authorities in the late Ottoman and early Republican periods) along with the mythical figures in the Kurdish historiography (such as Ehmede Xani) formed the basis of the dissident Kurdish identity and paved the way for the Kurdish contentious politics. It is known that, despite the intertwining of Kurdish ethnic and religious identities in the past, the Kurdish movement had a hard-secularist position for a long time until the 1990s.

Facing the long-lasting mobilization of the Islamists among the Kurdish poor, especially in urban peripheries, the Kurdish movement had to moderate its anti-religious position and has embraced "the democratic Islam" paradigm lately (Çiçek, 2016). For the Kurdish movement, this paradigm means the democratization of Islam, deconstruction of the state monopoly over religion and reconstruction of more inclusive Islamic understanding with an emphasis on justice and peace. One of the most significant practices of democratic Islam paradigm is "the civic Friday

prayers," which were organized by the leadership of the BDP in the 2010s. The party called the pious Kurdish electorate for praying on the streets against the Turkish nationalist propaganda of the Diyanet in Diyarbakır and other Kurdish populated provinces of Turkey.[169] Thousands of pious Kurds responded to this call and performed the Friday prayers on the streets for several weeks. The civic Friday prayers have become popularized and turned into an act of resistance even among the Turkish sector. During the Gezi Park Protests in 2013, the civic Friday prayers became a heroic resistance act: some protestors performed their prayers on the frontlines of Gezi Park. The secular Turkish middle-class protestors protected those who performed their prayers in the park from the police intervention. This act of resistance and mutual respect deconstructed the imagined boundaries between seculars and religious conservatives, between Turkish and Kurdish protestors.

More significantly, with the call of Abdullah Öcalan and under the supervision of the HDP, the democratic Islamic paradigm resulted in convention of the Democratic Islamic Congress (DİK) in 2014. The first meeting of the DİK had been organized in Diyarbakır, and the second and following meeting were organized in Istanbul. The DİK meetings and activities have become very significant in the 2010s. The HDP in Bağcılar has recently become an epicenter for the DİK meetings and activities presumably because of two factors: Kurdish population density is very high in the district, and most of the *mele*s come from the peripheries of Istanbul. In 2017, the Holy Birthday (*Kutlu Doğum Haftası*) celebration, in which hundreds of pious Kurds from Bağcılar and other peripheral districts participated, was organized with the cooperation of DİK and DİAYDER[170] in the Bağcılar's headquarters of the

[169] For members of the Shaafi sect, what matters is not the space, whether it is mosque or not, but the convention of believers. At least 40 people coming together can perform the Friday prayer anywhere. Participants of the civic Friday prayers did not criticize Islam, but its pro-systematic interpretation.
[170] DİAYDER is the sister organization of the DİK.

HDP. In such meetings, the *mele*s produce a cultural framework for Islamic-based resistance, as they position the Kurdish people as "oppressed Muslims" against the dominant-oppressing Islamist actors (e.g. the ruling AKP). The *mele*s heavily criticize the state's control and manipulation of religion. In April 2016, the HDP Bağcılar headquarters hosted the open meeting of the DİK, in which hundreds of Kurdish activists and voters all around the country participated. In this meeting, the chairperson of DİAYDER, Ekrem Baran, summarized their aim as follows:

> Our aim is not to compete with other religious communities and groups, because we do not have any conflicting interest with them. Instead, our primary goal is to represent and carry out the Prophet Muhammad's struggle against oppression and injustice today. As a matter of fact, although the Prophet was expelled, oppressed, and lived in poor conditions during his lifetime, he never gave up his search for justice. Today we can overcome the chaotic conditions in the Middle East countries by reviving the authentic vision of Islam and by recognizing the struggle of the Prophet. Our approach is based on tolerance, equality, and justice; we never discriminate against any language, identity, and race. Because God (Allah) and our prophet command us to do so. However, we are also very aware of the fact that these principles are not valid or relevant in any Islamic country today. We know that those so-called Islamic states, which have recently met in Istanbul, indeed oppress, torture and even slaughter minorities in their own countries.[171] We can only unmask the hypocritical stances of those so-called Islamic states by recognizing and applying the struggle of our Prophet. As DİAYDER and DİK, we call our people to demonstrate their solidarity with our brothers in Kurdistan and to support the sister family project of our party.

After the meeting, *mawlid* ceremony was performed in the Kurdish language by the *mele*s and the visitors had special meals (*pilav* and roasted meat). In the HDP's Bağcılar headquarters, such religious meetings continued to be held in holy days (such as *kandil*s) with the cooperation of the DİK and DİAYDER.

The history of the pro-Kurdish *mele* organization in Bağcılar as well as in Istanbul is quite new. In 2008, the Kurdish *mele*s affiliated with the Kurdish movement were organized under DIAYDER in Istanbul. Most *mele*s in Bağcılar,

[171] He refers to the meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Istanbul.

who are official members of DIAYDER today, were usually educated in the traditional Islamic schools (*madrasa*s). Only a few *mele*s studied in modern religious vocational schools (*imam-hatip*) and faculties of theology in the cities. A small number of the *mele*s whom I interviewed are retired imams; they used to work as imams of Diyanet in the Kurdish region in the past. However, today, none of *mele*s whom I interviewed work for Diyanet. In 2011, as part of "the Kurdish democratic initiative," the AKP government offered all *mele*s a public title and opportunity to work as "official" imams, but most of them rejected this offer. It is because they believed that being an independent scholar is more significant than the official title/position and salary. *Mele* Bedri said that

> If a *mele* is bounded by the state salary, he might probably move away from his people. If a *mele* becomes a state agent, he might ignore the problems of his own people and only mind the deeds of the state. More importantly, if a *mele* obeys the state, he becomes discredited in the eyes of his people. If a *mele* becomes an official, then our people will feel betrayed.

The *mele*s regularly visit the party and attend the party programs and activities in Bağcılar. They construct radical-democratic Islamic frames within the party circles. In my focus group interview with the *mele*s in Bağcılar, who are members of the DİAYDER, they underscored that "true revolutionary origins of Islam" have been systematically distorted by the nation-states. The *mele*s claimed that from the Umayyads period in the 8th century onwards Islam had been transformed into a "pro-systemic religious system," "the religion of order," and "the religion of tyrants" for disciplining the poor and oppressing the minorities. They asserted that their primary goal today is to find out "the genuine interpretations of Islam" and convey these "true interpretations" to the mass of believers. The *mele*s stated that they are not only interested in the day of judgement or the afterlife as the imams of Diyanet do, but also in search of solutions to the current social problems,

injustices and inequalities. In their own words, they "try to find Islamic solutions for peace, democracy, human rights and economic justice." That is why they prefer to address the Kurdish issue and the problems of other oppressed minorities in Turkey with an Islamic perspective. By recounting examples from the Islamic historiography, they argued that "their movement should not only defend the rights of Kurdish people but must be the voice of all sorts of victims, the poor and the oppressed classes." The *mele*s drew parallels between their own roles and the historical roles of Abu Zer and Ali the Caliph; as they argued that the practices of the ruling AKP today is indeed very similar to those of Muawiya and Yazid in the 7th century.[172] Bedri define their mission as "maintaining the tradition of resistance of the oppressed against the persecutors and the sovereigns in the history of Islam."

The *mele*s, in general, criticized the Diyanet officials for making Turkish-nationalist propaganda in the mosques and not recognizing the Kurdish reality. According to them, the Diyanet has never responded to the urgent needs of Kurdish people, as its officials refrain from talking about "social peace" and "solidarity". The *mele*s' easy correspondence with the religious-conservative people (in fact, they share the same habitus), their good command of Islamic knowledge and Kurdish language, provide them a comparative advantage in mobilizing the Kurdish electorate. It is possible to say that the *mele*s are organic intellectuals in the ethno-religious environment of traditional Kurdish habitus. As it is stated earlier, they move back and forth between the pro-Kurdish masjids and the party platforms. They are in every corner of the everyday life in Bağcılar. By leading the religious performances, performing *mawlid*s and rituals in holy days, facilitating meetings in

[172] Abu Zer is one of the first Muslims who lived in the time of the Prophet. He is known as the first anarchist in the history of Islam. Hz. Ali, the fourth caliph of Islam, was killed by Muaviye, the founder of the Umayyads. Yezid is the son of Muawiyah.

*bayram*s and *kandil*s, and praying in Kurdish in the funeral ceremonies, the Kurdish *mele*s often become natural protagonists of the party in Bağcılar.

During my fieldwork, I observed that one of the primary reasons behind the frequent visits of the *mele*s to the party is the everlasting "*taziye*" (condolence) ceremonies in the big hall of HDP Bağcılar headquarters. It is the Kurdish *mele*s who perform the necessary religious rituals for those "guerillas," who had participated in the Kurdish insurgency and fell down during the clashes –especially during the recent clashes with the ISIS. The *mele*s underline that the Diyanet officials refuse to undertake responsibility in these "political" funerals. Many Kurdish interviewees, both the HDP and the AKP supporters, stated that they are disturbed by the fact that Diyanet "exclude" some Kurdish funerals. For the interviewees, death is not an equalizing factor between Turkish and Kurdish people. It is not surprising to see that, in the *taziye* ceremonies, the *mele*s say prayers and preach sermons after "the Kurdish martyrs" in the Kurdish language. For the *taziye* ceremonies, sometimes hundreds of Kurdish people (most of whom are the relatives of "the Kurdish martyrs") gather under the roof of the HDP, and some of those visitors are not supporters of the HDP. Most visitors see the *taziye* ceremonies not as a "political event" but as a "religious duty."[173] Nonetheless, it is possible to maintain that the *taziye*s and the *mele*s, who perform the necessary religious rituals after the deceased, are very significant opportunities for the HDP.

While the *mele*s have -to some extent- become successful in attracting the religious-conservative electorate through their democratic Islam articulation in the Kurdish populated eastern-southeastern region, the local *mele* organization have

[173] There are two types of "must-do" religious duty in Islam: *farz-ı ayın* and *farz-ı kifaye*. The former (such as salah or fasting) applies all Muslim believers, but the latter can be practiced by the participation of some believers. As some Kurdish segments have higher religious awareness, they participate in the funeral ceremonies regardless of the political inclination of the deceased.

become one of the main pillars of the movement-party in Bağcılar. The Kurdish movement's reappropriation of Islam and embracement of the *mele*s have been reflected in the activists' discourses at the local level and the changing face of the HDP's local organization. For instance, the HDP activists act very carefully during the Ramadan – they do not eat, drink, or smoke publicly, and politely warn those who did in the party headquarters and offices in Bağcılar. A well-known Islamist activist, Hüda Kaya, who was one of the most legendary figures of headscarf struggle in the 1990s, was nominated by the HDP for the general election once and for the municipal elections twice in Bağcılar. Hüda Kaya and other Muslim activists and scholars, such as Ekrem Baran, Abdülbaki Erdoğmuş and Nimetullah Erdoğmuş, have frequently visited and met with the locals in Bağcılar before and during the elections. [174] By adopting the democratic Islam paradigm and with the help of the Islamic intermediaries, the HDP tries to transform itself (from assertive-secularist position to moderate/tolerant position) and to win the hearts of the religious-conservative Kurdish masses.

However, the HDP's mobilization over the religious discourses and intermediaries has also limits. At this juncture, I want to narrate a quite interesting anecdote from my focus group interview with the *mele*s that discloses the shifting attitudes between two Kurdish generations and the second generation's distance towards the religion. When I started the group interview, young Kurdish people also wanted to participate in our discussion on the revolutionary interpretations of Islam. I gladly welcomed all of them. Yet as the discussion was prolonged and turned into agitation of Islam, the young people seemed to get bored and left the room one by one. As soon as the last one left, an older Kurdish *mele* started to complain about

[174] Abdülbaki Erdoğmuş is theologian, ex-mufti and ex-deputy from Diyarbakır in the 2000s. Nimetullah Erdoğmuş is theologian, ex-mufti and now the HDP's Diyarbakır deputy.

“the degeneration of Kurdish youth.” He stated that “the Kurdish youth are disrespectful; they never listen to their elderly and keep apart from religious traditions.” While the first-generation Kurdish migrants are generally more religious-conservative, the second-generation Kurds are less interested in Islam and more secularly oriented. As the quantitative analysis in the previous section shows, the second-generation Kurdish youth are less religious than the previous Kurdish generation. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the *mele*s and their emphasis on the democratic Islam are more appealing for the middle-aged or elderly Kurdish voters; it is difficult for the movement-party to mobilize the Kurdish youth by using Islamic discourses and intermediaries.

Besides the pro-Kurdish *mele* organization in the district, there are also other Islamist actors which are close to the HDP in Bağcılar. It is especially necessary to underline the heterodox Islamic discursive frames produced by the Med-Zehra community –one of the *Risale-i Nur* movements. Although the community does not openly declare its support towards the HDP, it is easy to find pro-Kurdish arguments in their statements. Atacan (2001) describes the community as follows:

> Med-Zehra is a split from the Nurcu movement and it emphasizes Nursi’s Kurdish background. It openly criticizes Turkish nationalist interpretation of Nursi’s writings. In other words, Med-Zehra is not only an important Nurcu group in Turkey but also an important representative of Kurdish Islamic movements.” (p.112). “[The Med-Zehra] criticizes the policies of the Turkish state regarding the Kurds in Turkey. Its members argue that the only common tie between Kurds and Turks is Islam. Because of this, a solution to the Kurdish problem must be developed within the framework of Islam and should provide Kurds with national rights of their own. Problems involved in providing Kurds with national rights will be solved through the establishment of an Islamic federation. (p.137)

Despite the noticeable resemblance of AKP’s Kurdish resolution project and the Med-Zehra’s discursive frame in terms of establishing “Islamic brotherhood” (or Islamic-based solidarity), the latter strikingly differs from the former with its

emphasis on the Kurdish national rights and proposal of the federal structure for the Turkish and Kurdish nations. Today the Kurdish members of Med-Zehra community are much closer to the HDP than the AKP both at the local and national levels. That's why Selahattin Demirtaş, the co-chairperson of the HDP, acknowledged the support of the Med-Zehra community after the party's electoral success in 2015.

According to the Kurdish members of the community in Bağcılar, the Turkish state discourse continues to distort Said Nursi's (or "Kurdi"s) authentic identity, as many of them believe that Nursi called for the awakening of the Kurdish nation, rebelled against Sultan Abdulhamid's dictatorial regime at a time with the demand of democracy and freedom. Although Nursi used "Kurds" and "Kurdish" pronouns and referred to the "Kurdistan" region in his writings, these references are later censored by his Turkish-nationalist followers. The Med-Zehra community members told that they keep adhering to the authentic vision of Said Nursi (i.e. equal status of all nations). In my interview with a Kurdish member of the community, he suggests that Nursi's life and struggle should be taken as a model by the Kurdish Muslim believers. Even he offers that the Said Nursi could be a role model for the Kurdish movement in the future, the party could then be more appealing for a large number of religious-conservative Kurdish voters.

Although Med-Zehra is not as extensive as other Islamic communities (such as Menzilists) in Bağcılar, it is ground-breaking actor in terms of its discursive emphasis. Also, in our daily conversations at the party headquarters, many Kurdish activists of the HDP praised Med-Zehra community's discourses and practices in Bağcılar. Like the Kurdish *mele*s, the Med-Zehra community contributes to the formation of pro-Kurdish discursive space in Bağcılar. In addition to the *meles'* radical-democratic Islamic articulation, the Med-Zehra's heterodox interpretation of

Islam and Said Nursi are influential on the mobilization of some Kurdish groups towards the HDP in Bağcılar.

Last but not least, it is necessary to underline that, similar to the AKP's inherent Islamist linkages, the HDP sometimes receives direct support from the traditional-Islamic figures and actors in mobilizing Kurdish electorate on the ground. For instance, as part of the electoral campaign in summer 2018, the HDP Bağcılar strategically invited a famous sheikh-seyyid from Bitlis, who is believed to be coming from the lineage of the Prophet family, to a rally in the Demirkapı neighborhood. Even dozens of pro-AKP Kurds participated in his religious talk and escorted him during his walk in the neighborhood. Consequently, it is possible to argue that radical democratic Islamic articulation and Islamic intermediaries have begun to be effective on the HDP's mobilization of religious-conservative Kurdish in Bağcılar. The Islamic actors affiliated with (or supportive of) the HDP significantly contribute to the pro-Kurdish space-making process, which after all increases the chances of the Kurdish movement-party in Bağcılar.

6.4 Resource mobilization

At the beginning of the chapter, I showed that the Kurdish migrants' perception and feeling of deprivation and collective grievances have channeled them towards the contentious politics and the HDP voting. Later, I discussed that the pro-Kurdish space-making in everyday life, which has been led by the Kurdish activists and voters of the HDP, can also be interpreted as a resource-making strategy. The pro-Kurdish space-making is influential in mobilizing the existing electorate and, perhaps, on recruiting new members on the ground. Lastly, I discussed that the Kurdish *mele* organization (and relatedly, the pro-Kurdish masjids) and the Med-

Zehra community not only serve as critical spatial actors but also provide significant frames and (human) resources for the pro-Kurdish political mobilization.

While it is necessary to ask the "why" question for seeking the roots and origins of contentious politics and social movements, it is equally important to address and discuss the "how" question – in our case, how the contentious movement-party, HDP, become sustainable and successful at the local level? This question can be answered through the resource mobilization (RM) perspective. The RM theories suggests looking at the various forms of resources, capitals and intermediaries/networks, and shed light on the functioning of the movements on the ground. Like other movements and movement-parties, the HDP's persistence primarily depends upon its strategic-effective use of the available material, financial and human resources (Jenkins, 1983).

Accordingly, I will discuss the resources mobilization of the Kurdish movement-party in Bağcılar in the following sections. In this regard, two specific upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments are very important: first, the Kurdish "patriot" shopkeepers, tradesmen and businessmen, and second, the young-educated-professional Kurdish activists.[175] While the first group provide material and financial support to the party, the second group provide a qualified human resource and undertake the burdensome operations of the party.

6.4.1 Kurdish "patriot" shopkeepers, tradesmen and businessmen

Some recent studies point out the emerging middle-class among the Kurdish society in the metropolitan areas (Koçal, 2017, 2018; Küçük, 2018, 2019). The neoliberal transformation has created dual worlds of (Kurdish) poor and middle-class in the

[175] The HDP officials, activists and voters use the "patriot" (*yurtsever*) title to define the pro-Kurdish orientation of Kurds. Being *yurtsever* is an honor among the Kurdish community.

Kurdish dominated metropolises such as Diyarbakır. While the Kurdish poor have been marginalized in the deprived urban zones, the Kurdish middle-class have moved to the gated communities and luxury apartments on the wealthier zones of the city. On the one hand, there is an exacerbating ghettoization and grave poverty of the informal proletariat, on the other hand, there is gentrification and marketization of middle-class spaces. In addition to the spatial transformations, there is a rupture in the political imaginaries of the Kurdish poor and middle-class in the metropolitan areas. While the former prioritizes the demand for equality and political autonomy, the latter prioritizes the demand for freedom and cultural autonomy (Küçük 2019). Following this discussion, in this section, I will discuss the how the emerging Kurdish middle-class –consisting of the "patriot" shopkeepers, tradesmen and businessmen– in Bağcılar becomes significant for the resource mobilization of the HDP. Despite being few in number, the middle-class supporters are very critical for the movement-party at the local level.

However, prior to that, it is necessary to mention the general class composition of pro-HDP Kurds in Bağcılar. Like the pro-AKP Kurds, the majority of the pro-HDP Kurds consist of working-class families living below the poverty threshold in the district. As a matter of fact, the pro-HDP Kurdish electorate are generally "working poor," such as textile workers, construction workers, subcontracted service workers, etc. In order to make this point explicit, I want to narrate my participant-observations from the fieldwork: Before the 2018 general elections, the HDP Istanbul organization decided to arrange transportation (bus) services for the Kurdish electorate from the central points of Istanbul to the east and southeast regions, so that the Kurdish migrants whose registers (of birth) were outside of Istanbul were able to vote. For this goal, the HDP officials in Bağcılar

started to call the Kurdish migrant voters, who are registered on the party's lists, one by one. The officials asked the migrants whether they wanted to go to their towns for the elections or not, and if they got an affirmative answer, they made bus reservations for them. In order to make participant observation, I took part in this operation. On my list, there were 20 Kurdish migrant voters who are from Van and Bitlis provinces. Among the ones I called by phone, only three migrants stated that they want to go voting by using the party's transportation. The remaining 17 Kurdish voters stated that they cannot go out of town because they will be working on the election day.

Almost all phone-respondents are "manual laborers" in the textile workshops. On the background of our phone conversations, I heard sounds of the sewing machines and tunes of arabesque-pop music, which are mundane symbols of textile workshops. When I reminded my respondents that they have all legal rights to go voting, they told me that their bosses do not let them to take a day off. Most employers do not allow their employees to go out of town even for a day in order not to interrupt the production process, otherwise they could be fired. Although most of the textile employers are also Kurdish, only a few of them allow the Kurdish migrant workers to take a few days off and go voting. It is known that the Kurdish textile workers are employed under very harsh conditions (Gazi, 2018). Most of them earn below the poverty threshold and do not have extra income or savings. They usually work six days a week (sometimes whole week without holidays); they could take one weekday off, when there is no production in the workshop.

During my fieldwork, I also realized that the food consumption patterns in the HDP headquarters in Bağcılar give a clear idea about the class profile of the pro-HDP Kurds. During the lunchtimes at the headquarters, the party members and

visitors usually eat meals and fast-foods (such as *lahmacun*, *pide*, *dürüm*, *pilav*, etc.) provided by the Kurdish "patriot" shopkeepers and tradesmen, who act like informal caterers of the party.[176] These "generous" people provide special dishes (such as *kavurmalı pilav* – rice with roasted meat) to the hundreds of visitors especially on the *taziye* days, when the funeral ceremonies and rituals being performed. On other days, when the "patriot" shopkeepers and tradesmen neglect their duty of sending meal, the party members and visitors eat breakfast-type lunch, consisting of bread, cheese, olives and tomatoes, which are placed all over the old newspapers on the meeting tables. In my regular visits to the headquarters, while I was sitting in the kitchen to make small chats with the visitors, I often noticed that, some party members – usually Kurdish workers– stop by at the party after work, come to the kitchen and open the refrigerator in search of food, and immediately become disappointed in front of the empty fridge.

These participant observations prove the significance of finding material and financial resources for the movement-party. It is not surprising to see the total material/financial contributions of the Kurdish proletariat to the party is indeed limited compared to the "patriot" petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoise. Despite being few in number, Kurdish "patriot" shopkeepers, tradesmen and businessmen play vital role in the HDP's resource mobilization. The middle- and upper-classes make substantial monetary and in-kind donations to the party, offer their free office spaces, empty (work)shops and stores for the party activities, and if necessary, rent extra office space for the party's electoral campaigns, lend their private or company cars for the party's operations and activities, etc. The contributions of the upper- and middle-classes determine the organizational strength of the HDP in Bağcılar.

[176] In this instance, I especially refer to restaurant owners or *lokantacı* in Turkish.

In addition to small group of Kurdish bourgeoise, there are numerous Kurdish petty bourgeoises supporting the HDP in Bağcılar. Today, there are hundreds of small- and medium-sized Kurdish tradesmen (including groceries, buffets, nuts stores, bakeries, variety stores, etc) who explicitly or implicitly support the HDP all around the Bağcılar neighborhoods. It is known that there are about 50 Kurdish "patriot" tradesmen who have workshops and offices in the İSTOÇ Traders' Center in Bağcılar. Additionally, there are dozens of pro-Kurdish businessmen who live in Bağcılar but have offices/shops in the central districts such as Taksim and Şişli. The HDP's Bağcılar branch keeps recording the lists of these pro-Kurdish shopkeepers, tradesmen and businessmen and updates these lists regularly.

During the electoral campaign in 2015, by using brand new private car of a Kurdish "patriot" tradesman[177], I and a few Kurdish activists transported hundreds of kilos of brochures, posters and stickers from the HDP's Istanbul headquarters to the HDP's Bağcılar headquarters and other neighborhood offices. Before the 2015 elections, the HDP's publicity meeting of its local candidates was held at a (basement-floor) wedding hall, whose owner is a well-known "patriot" Kurdish businessman, in the Fatih neighborhood of Bağcılar. Again, the publicity meeting of the HDP for the 2018 elections was also held in the same wedding hall. The second meeting began as soon as a wedding ceremony had just finished, even the dishes in the tables had not been tidied up. As the cleaners started collecting the dishes and trash all over the place, the party executives and activists (including me) hardly heard each other because of the noisy background.

It is possible to infer from this last instance that the political commitment and profit-maximization go hand in hand for some pro-Kurdish businessmen.

[177] It was *Renault Megane*. Its market value was about 90.000 TL as of 2015, and 120.000 TL in 2019.

Nonetheless, sometimes, the latter outweighs the former. In an interview, one Kurdish activist of the party, Zana (32, Bitlis, construction worker), claimed that "some of the Kurdish bourgeois do not show their true political identity for protecting their business and reputation."

> A few of the upper-class HDP supporters are very active; they participate in marches, meetings, and press releases. But most others don't want to be politically active despite their solid support for the HDP. They don't want to uncover themselves. This latter group usually consists of patriot businessmen, which is the Kurdish bourgeoisie. They support the party financially and morally, but they do not want to be identified with the party to keep things intact. Therefore, they do not participate in the party events.

It is necessary to remark that neoliberal capitalism has entailed multiple economic trajectories for the Kurdish migrants –with different degrees of exclusion, integration and mobility– in the urban context (Yılmaz, 2014). With the forced migration and dispossession in a relatively short period of time, most Kurdish migrants became manual laborers in the most undesirable (informal) jobs and sectors in the city. Although Kurdish shopkeepers, tradesmen and businessmen experienced the same processes with all other Kurdish migrants in the past, they have been able to climb the social ladder within two decades by exclusively using the opportunities of the neoliberal economy and communal solidarity. Erkan (48, Kurdish private contractor, Bitlis) asserted that almost four out of five businessmen in Bağcılar "have Kurdish origins, because the Kurdish community as a whole have worked very hard here in order to overcome their disadvantageous position arising from the migration."

During the fieldwork, many Kurdish interviewees narrate the "successful" upward mobility stories from their family, friend and kinship circles. A Bitlisian Kurdish worker told that one of his close relatives, who was a forced migrant like himself, has developed his textile business in the last decade and bought some shares

of the famous private hospital in the district.[178] This migrant and his family moved to a luxury apartment building in Başakşehir, which is located a few kilometers away from Bağcılar.[179] In general, some Kurdish migrant-entrepreneurs took advantage of informal economic resources in the city. There are some migrants who have specialized in the construction business and seized the rents in the booming construction sector in and around Bağcılar; or there are some Kurdish migrant-family companies (generally small and medium scale ones) in the textile sector that became successful via family and kinship networks surrounding them.[180] Lastly, there is a small fraction of Kurdish migrants, especially among the second-generation, who got university education, started professional careers and achieved upward mobility.

The most significant strategy for survival and, if possible, upward mobility for the pro-HDP Kurdish migrants is the communal solidarity, which involve both cohabitation of extended families and reliance on the kinship networks.[181] After the forced migration, the traditional Kurdish habitus, which involves internal solidarity within and between extended households, has continued in the city (Yılmaz, 2014). It is possible to assert that family- and kinship-based solidarities have leveraged the economic status of some migrants and thus facilitated their upward mobility in the district.[182] As a matter of fact, having many children and living in extended households provide solid benefits not only for the Kurdish migrants but for all immigrants in the urban context of Turkey (Şengül & Ersoy, 2003).[183] In the case of

[178] It is supposed to be Erdem Hastanesi in the Güneşli neighborhood in Bağcılar.
[179] Başakşehir is an upscale building area with many closed communities where generally the better-off migrants of the district move on after their upward mobility.
[180] The kinship networks among the Kurds from Bitlis and Siirt seem especially effective in Bağcılar.
[181] The existing literature on "varieties of welfare regimes" indicate that the traditional family- and kinship-based welfare regime in Turkey is significantly different from the formal welfare regimes.
[182] At this juncture, it is necessary to remember that the statistical analysis shows that pro-HDP Kurds are likely to have larger household size than the pro-AKP Kurds in Bağcılar and Istanbul.
[183] Nevertheless, Şensoy (2014) emphasizes that while child labor seems satisfactory in meeting the financial needs of poor families in the short-run, but it has clearly negative influence on poverty in the long run as the lack of education hinders the upward mobility of Kurdish poor children.

Kurdish migrants in Bağcılar, the family- and kinship-based welfare regime especially become effective through income-pooling mechanism, that is to say, Kurdish migrant families pool their incomes or other (material/financial) resources and make consumption together in order to save money. It is possible to maintain that those Kurdish migrants relying on extended family and kinship solidarities have successfully coped with the material deprivation since their arrival in Istanbul.

> Kemal: Kurds from Diyarbakır came after the Bitlis migrants, so I guess they were less fortunate. But those Bitlis and Muş migrants have similar stories. When they first came to Istanbul, there were few elites among them. It was very few. All of them were workers in the textile workshops at the beginning. But, after the 1990s, let us say, 7-8 brothers came together and started their own textile business. In a couple of years, they had learned the job, and they had said why did not we establish our own workshops. They thought that 'why we are making money for the boss, we can earn money for ourselves.' Of course, then owning textile workshops became so popular for everyone in the 1990s. [İK: How they manage the labor force?] They did their own. They worked with their relatives. Of course, this solidarity situation was not only about the Kurds, but it was also relevant for all migrants. You know, united we stand, we make more money. Brothers, cousins and relatives came together and started their own business, but some of them succeeded while most others went bankrupt later.
>
> (Kemal, Bitlis, 48, private contractor)

> There are a lot of homeowners among the Kurds in Bağcılar, here is how it is possible: for example, 4-5 brothers worked together, then they bought an apartment. They paid the loan, let us say in five years, then they started working for other brother to buy an apartment in another five years. Or they sold the first apartment and shared the initial money. There has always been solidarity within the family. Those who wanted to do business in the past made the same way. Our community is not in such bad condition anymore. Maybe there are a few people stuck in poverty, but in general, we are all good. On the contrary, some make good money in textiles, some start their own construction companies. There are contractors, excavators, and electricians among us. There are some notable Kurdish businessmen in Bağcılar.
>
> (Salim, Malatya, 42, real estate agent)

As it is seen in these narratives, living in extended families and being embedded in kinship networks are advantageous for Kurdish migrants. Through these communal solidarities, Kurdish migrants have been able to survive in the city, and if possible, to move upwards in class hierarchies. In Kurdish migrant families,

sometimes, there are 4-5 working members in Bağcılar, and as of 2017, they can earn 7-8 thousand TL as total household income. Nonetheless, there are hundreds of single Kurdish workers (or seasonal workers) in Bağcılar and other deprived zones of the city. Many informants stated that being single in Istanbul is very disadvantageous in economic terms because it is harder for them to save money. The single Kurdish workers must spend a substantial amount of their money on accommodation and food. Living in extended families substantially decrease these types of expenditures for the Kurdish migrants. Nonetheless, some Kurdish migrants declared that their reliance on family and kinship solidarities is not a choice but an obligation. In other words, after the forced migration, they had no other chance but to depend on the family and kinship solidarities. If they had not been dispossessed in such large extent or if they had other available economic resources in the city, then they would not have been relying on family and kinship solidarities.

At this juncture, we need to underline a recurrent pattern in the narratives of the Kurdish migrants in Bağcılar: When they first came to Istanbul, most of them resided in single-story *gecekondu*s (usually having a single room or a few rooms) alongside their brothers or their close relatives. These single-story *gecekondu*s have transformed into *apartkondu*s over time with the pooling of financial resources within extended family and kinship networks (Perouse, 2004). With the arrival of new brothers and relatives into their networks, the migrant families' financial resources have incrementally increased. As it is seen in the Salim's example (see above), the migrant-brothers worked for the benefit of each other within family circles: all working brothers bring their incomes and make savings together, then they buy a large apartment first for the elderly brother, in which all brothers (and their wives and children) live in this apartment together for a while. Then,

maintaining their solidarity (living in the same house and reducing the consumption expenditures), the migrant-brothers continue to save more money and buy new apartments for each of all respectively from older to younger one. Especially, the pro-Kurdish community who deprived of clientelist resources had to apply the strategy of family-kinship solidarity to buy houses and establish businesses in the past. In the Bağcılar context, this strategy became very popular among the Kurdish migrants in the 1990s; most of the existing textile workshops owned by the Kurdish migrant families were established during this period. Canan narrates her family's self-employment story as follows:

> My uncle and his family members are victims of the war. As a matter of fact, all we are. We migrated from our village to the city center of Tatvan, but they did not come to Tatvan with us, instead they directly migrated to Istanbul. They settled in Bağcılar in 1993. They have been here for 25 years. All family worked in the textiles. And, let me tell you, they [i.e. the children] started working at a very young age, they did not get any education. As a whole family, they worked very hard in the past. You know, the textiles took their childhood away from them, it took their adulthood and youth years. They have become a little more comfortable recently. Sometimes, in my neighborhood, I have seen Syrian migrants who are also victims of war. Their story resembles our story. [İK: Has their financial situation improved or not?] Of course, it is better now. They established their own workshops. They used to be workers, but now they are bosses.

From the 1990s onwards, hundreds of Kurdish migrant families established their own textile workshops by renting empty stores on the basement floors and buying second-hand machines in Bağcılar. In these workshops, the Kurdish households usually employed their own children and relatives, who did not pursue self-interests but served for the common benefit of their families, relatives and community. Communal solidarity and benefits have outweighed the individual interests of Kurdish laborers who work for their families and relatives. Kurdish communal solidarity is an *ad hoc* "communitarian capitalism" practice in the context of the extremely individualistic neoliberal capitalism (Khoon, 2005; Bieling, 2005).

Some Kurdish workers whom I interviewed asserted that they worked willingly for their relatives' business because they wanted to contribute to the dissident (pro-HDP) Kurdish community. The Kurdish workers showed empathy towards their employers not only because of the familial and kinship bonds but because of the identical stories of discrimination, oppression, and injustices. Kurdish employers and employees in the family/kinship businesses generally have similar political histories as supporters of the movement-party.

Therefore, the family-kinship solidarities and the dissident (pro-HDP) identity could sometimes overlap in the lives of the Kurdish migrants in the district. First, the Kurdish family and kinship bonds have been reconstructed and reproduced with reference to collective grievances of the past. Second, the common experiences of injustice, oppression and discrimination have led to the development of communal solidarities among the Kurdish migrants. These two reciprocal conditions produce some sort of oppressed-class consciousness among the dissident Kurdish community in Bağcılar. My participant observations show that the HDP recognizes and employ the communal solidarity networks for mobilizing the Kurdish electorate at the local level. For instance, instead of calling Kurdish voters individually, the HDP Bağcılar often invites the whole family and kin members to party activities, meetings and campaigns.

In the interviews, some pro-HDP Kurdish employers stated that when they fall short of labor (power) in the workshop or need extra labor support during the peaks seasons (of the production process), they request from their own family members and close relatives to help them. When the currency crisis hit in the summer of 2018, a young Kurdish female interviewee in the HDP headquarters said that, despite her eagerness for education, her father did not allow her to study at

university because he needed help in the workshop. In addition, Kurdish employers do not pay "just wages" to their family members and relatives, because they believe that being helpful in the urgent moments is a moral duty of the family and relatives. With the increasing costs vis-à-vis the intensity of production, the family and relatives have hardly earned income. Therefore, sometimes, the Kurdish communal solidarity involves exploitation of family members and relatives. A pro-HDP Kurdish real estate agent, Hakim (52, Bitlis) describes this contradiction as follows:

> Solidarity and protection among our [Kurdish] people are like as follows: for example, suppose that you have a business in hardware or construction sectors, you seek workers whom you can employ and dominate easily or whom you can manipulate, then, of course, you have to prefer your circle [i.e. relatives and kin members]. For example, if you do not make their social insurance, your family members and relatives cannot complain. This is the case. It is not so much like a humanistic solidarity.

Recognizing the contradictions of Kurdish communal solidarity in urban context, some informants claimed that sooner or later Kurdish migrants are appealed by the neoliberal-capitalist ethos. As a member of emerging Kurdish middle-class in Istanbul, Gökhan (35 years old, Siirt, academician) describes this process through his family story as follows:

> Let us consider the example of my cousins. My uncle's and aunt's children were used to cooperate with and support each other. They became partners in the textile workshop and worked together for some time in the past. Then, two or three years later, they could not get along with each other. Why? Because common language, ethnicity or political identity function up to some point. As soon as you learn the rules of the business, I guess, you want to start up your own company. Or you might find somewhere else which pays more. Previously, kinship is considered as a refuge or shelter. In the past, there used to be solidarity, Kurds preferred to work in the same workplace. But it does not matter anymore.

When I asked my informants, who work for their families' or relatives' textile workshops about the (domestic) exploitation issue, most of them became surprised with this question and stated that they do not feel being exploited. Even though many of them are underpaid and do not appreciate their working conditions, they do not

acknowledge the exploitation argument. Nevertheless, when I further asked them whether they will leave their family/kinship business if they are offered higher income and better working conditions from outsiders, most of them gave affirmative responses – i.e. they would opt for better opportunities outside. A pro-HDP Kurdish construction worker, Rıdvan (32, Bitlis) explained this point through his own experience as follows:

> In the past, we used to work for our relatives with low wages. My parents still want me to work in the textile workshop of my relatives, for the benefit of my relatives. They told me I should make money for our relatives instead of making money for someone else. But I do not want to do that anymore. Because, you know, they do not pay enough money. Someone can work for the sake of his relatives for one day or two days, but the next day, nobody wants to keep working with low wages. Nowadays people prefer to work where the salary is higher. I have recently decided that whoever gives me more money, I would work there.

Rıdvan stated that he wants to leave the textile workshop of his relatives, who are also members of the dissident (pro-HDP) Kurdish community in the district, for seeking more paying construction jobs. He asserted that Kurdish workers demanding more wages sooner or later would have to leave the textiles and start working in the constructions. The daily wages in the burdensome construction jobs are higher than unqualified jobs in textile workshops or factories – e.g. average daily wage is around 60-65 TL in the textile sector, whereas it is around 100 TL in the construction sector as of 2016. Besides, the demand for labor power in construction is steady, as there are hundreds of employment opportunities in the big construction projects and small local constructions. Similarly, some other informants stated that they have decided to leave textiles quite recently in search of higher wages in the construction sector.

In addition, both Turkish and Kurdish employers do not want to hire Kurdish workers for unqualified jobs in the textile sector anymore, because Syrian migrant workers are ready to work for much longer hours for far less wage. My informants

stated that on average the Syrian migrant workers' daily wage in the textiles is 30-35 TL, and it is about 50-60 TL in the constructions as of 2017. Especially, for undesirable jobs in the textile workshops (e.g. "*ortacı*" or "*ayakçı*"), the Kurdish employers hire Syrian children, who are the most destitute and precarious category of all migrants in Turkey. In the textiles, Syrian children might earn at most 500 TL in a month. Many pro-HDP Kurdish workers complained that not only the wage system but also employment conditions in the textile sector have seriously deteriorated with the immigration of Syrians to the district. Therefore, many Kurdish workers have opted for the construction sector recently. In general, the construction work is difficult with the lack of protective measures and bare minimum social insurance, but it offers much better income and prospects for those capable Kurdish workers who want to be foremen. Therefore, there is a higher probability of upward mobility for the Kurdish workers working in the constructions.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to underline that communal solidarity among the pro-HDP Kurds cannot be interpreted as a complete success story of the "ethnic entrepreneurship" (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990), because their economic conditions were very difficult in the past and continue to be fragile today. Even for the ones who achieved upward mobility in the textile sector in the last decade, keeping the stability of their supply chains and workflow are burdensome issues. If they cannot keep their business alive, they might again fall into poverty trap. Welat's (32, Bitlis, HDP activist) life-story and observations show these complexities:

> When my father first came to Istanbul, he worked as a manual laborer ("*amelelik*"), then he became porter, later he worked in the hardware store. We [the kids] started working in textiles at an early age. Almost all Kurds here have the same story, they used to be child workers in textiles in the past. I worked in textiles for a long time, for a very long time. But I decided to leave the textile sector right after I got out of prison. It was very depressing; I could not breathe there. I left the sector immediately after I found another job in the services sector. […] When my father came from the village, they did

> not have the qualifications for decent jobs. They did not have any skills; they did not have acquaintances. They had no other chance. For instance, my uncle came to Istanbul before 1994 [i.e. when their village was destroyed]. My uncle ran away from the village because he had got married without the consent of the bride's parents. After the war, we came to Istanbul and settled in my uncle's one-story *gecekondu*. We were 15 people living in that small house. I remember that we used to sleep in a single room as the whole family. All my brothers started working as apprentices in the textiles at a young age. Only one of my little brothers kept going to school, as he used to be the smartest one. […] Those migrants who came to Istanbul before the war are more fortunate, I guess, because they found jobs in the factories, they saved some money and became better off. For example, the Kurdish migrants from Adıyaman and Malatya had already set up their own business when we first came here Bağcılar. The migrants fleeing war, like us, were more desperate. Only their brothers and relatives helped those victims in the city. Therefore, all our relatives started to work in textiles. Over time, some of our people set up their own businesses and textile workshops […] It is easy to establish a workshop in cooperation with the brothers and relatives, you know, at least there is always someone you can borrow money from, but it is difficult to get a job. Where do you find a job? From big factories and big companies. To get a job from them, you need to bribe the contractor ("*fasoncu*") or send money and gifts to the managers. [İK: Does it always work this way?] Of course, you must bribe or send some gifts, or they will give the job to someone else. That is why, I guess, there are so many ups and downs in the textiles.

Most of the pro-HDP Kurdish employers underscored that after the migration they had lacked necessary resources and skills in the past; therefore, they had no option but to start from scratch. Behind the "success stories" of the Kurdish employers, there are dramatic experiences of exploitation and injustices. In order to overcome poverty, they sought innovative strategies for dealing with poverty – such as child work, working in two jobs, moonlighting, informal resources and activities, etc. As a matter of fact, the practice of child work was very widespread among the Kurdish migrant communities, and there were always more than one child-workers in the Kurdish migrant families. Almost all Kurdish employers started to work at an early age – from childhood onwards.

> I first came alongside my brother to Bahçelievler and Bağcılar in the early 1990s. In 1994, I started to work as a construction worker ("*inşaat amelesi*") in Güngören, then I worked respectively as a peddler, fruit seller, construction decorator. I have worked in all kinds of jobs. I have gone through difficult times. At last, I have become a real estate agent in Güngören, and in the

> meantime started my own construction firm. I am currently working as a private contractor. I have enough income today […] During the forced migration of the 1990s, I was in Bağcılar. I have witnessed the immigration of thousands of poor Kurdish migrants. All migrants were indeed poor. In that process, I told the party executives that we should not leave those Kurdish migrants alone. We must provide shelter and jobs for them. I suggested that the party could organize opportunities for them or at least we could construct a tent city for them in Bağcılar. We could have control over their arrivals and create job opportunities. But the party's capacity were extremely limited back then, so we could not realize such projects.
>
> (Erkan, 48, Bitlis, private construction contractor)

As it is seen in this narrative, the economic conditions of some Kurdish employers have improved over time. Along with the factors of informal economy and communal solidarity, this improvement can be associated with successful micro-entrepreneurship of some Kurdish migrants in the context of the neoliberal urban economy, as they carved out emerging local opportunities.

During my fieldwork, I figured out another implicit pattern behind the economic improvement and upward mobility of some pro-HDP Kurds, that is, shifting between different jobs and sectors. Many pro-HDP Kurdish interviewees point out to the fact that they are able to shift easily between jobs and sectors compared to the pro-AKP Kurds in the district, because they are more experienced in facing difficulties and taking risks than the latter group.[184] Nevertheless, this pattern (shifting between jobs and sectors) can be attributed to another structural factor: the relatively larger household size of and more working-members among the pro-HDP Kurdish families. While some members keep earning regular incomes, other members are able to move back and forth between different jobs and sectors in the pro-HDP Kurdish households. Furthermore, the concentration of Kurdish migrants in particular occupation zones facilitate the opportunity of job- and sector-shifts. Mehmet (32, Siirt) told his family experience of shifting jobs and sectors as follows:

[184] Keeping in mind that without depending on any clientelist resource, the pro-HDP Kurds must be more resilient in facing and dealing with the poverty issue in urban context.

> All my brothers started working in the *hal* [the wholesale vegetable market in Bayrampaşa] and continued to work there for a long time. Although they haven't always worked in the *hal*, but the *hal* has become their central location. They tried to set up their own business; if they failed, they got back to working in the *hal*. You know, sometimes they moved to the other sectors. Let us think from 1992 onwards: for instance, a few years after our migration, one of my elder brothers started driving taxi, then my other brother quitted his job in the *hal* and started to help him in the taxi business. By the way, they drove this taxi without legal driving license, because they were underage as they started working so early. My older brother kept working in the *hal* in the meantime […] Today, one of my elderly brothers is a public bus driver in the municipality. After doing various businesses, one of my younger brothers have become sharecropper, he engages in farming business near Istanbul, and yet sometimes he goes to the *hal* and bazaars.

It is not surprising to see that some Kurdish migrants have become successful at alternating jobs and sectors. Most of the Kurdish informants supporting the HDP today told that they either tried to become micro-entrepreneurs (peddlers, groceries, etc.) and set up their businesses and workshops in the past or have plans to do so in the future. With many working family members and the flexibility on jobs and sectors, some Kurds have carved out the (informal) opportunities of urban capitalism.

At this juncture, it is necessary to remark that the upward mobility the pro-HDP Kurdish entrepreneurs and employers is not a stable condition. Depending on the unfavorable economic conjuncture, their financial conditions sometimes becomes fragile and difficult to manage. Especially in the textile sector, regarding the fact that the production depends on the imported inputs and the ability to export of the final products, the economic as well as political fluctuations have severely affected the livelihoods and savings (or financial capitals) of the Kurdish migrants in the last 20 years. Both the pro-AKP and pro-HDP Kurdish textile employers told that the economic crises of 2001 and 2008 and the sharp fluctuation of the exchange rate in the 2017-2018 period harshly deteriorated their business, many of whom either suspended production or went bankrupt. Some of them have started to work as manual laborers in factories and constructions once again in order to maintain some

level of regular income. In addition, the real income and living conditions of some Kurdish textile employers have not improved as much as it is expected. They have to live "the working-class lives" – such that they still live in the same neighborhood and consume like a working-class family. Perhaps this contradiction might be attributed to the fact that the real wages have not improved, as the inflation figures have seriously risen, in the last decade in Turkey. However, I argue that the "sunk cost fallacy" can explain this contradiction more accurately.[185]

Although some Kurdish migrants have become "their own boss" by setting up textile workshops, they have hardly made profits to meet their initial debts. Those Kurdish "entrepreneurs" have borrowed the initial capital necessary for establishing textile workshop from either their relatives or banks. They incurred debts and credits for renting workspace and buying machine, as most starters rent basements floors of apartments and buy second-hand machines. It is expected that, under the favorable economic conditions, in which global and national markets function smoothly and producers easily import their textile products, these micro-entrepreneurs pay their initial debt back and make profits in the long run. However, during the economic contractions, as it is experienced in the summer of 2018 in Turkey, it is hard for these micro-entrepreneurs to survive in the face of increasing costs. As the extent of the textile sector shrinks over time, it becomes harder for them to pay the initial debts and credits back, but at the same time, there is no way out of the textile sector or no exit strategy available anymore. It turns out to be difficult for them to sell these machines in times of economic recession and crisis. During economic downturns, the self-employed Kurdish households in the textile sector continue to work either with

[185] A sunk cost is the initial cost of founding business (in past) that cannot be recovered (now). It is different from inventory or future costs "because the cost will be the same regardless of the outcome of a decision" (Kenton, 2018). Individuals falling into sunk cost must continue their production because of their previously invested resources – i.e. money and time.

zero profit or under low-profit margin to compensate their sunk cost. While many of the workshops go bankrupt, only some manage to make a profit in the long run.

As a matter of fact, during the economic crisis, the Kurdish employers must work at least as much as their workers to compensate increasing costs. In the crisis periods, family members (primarily the employer's children) and close relatives (nephews) of Kurdish employers had to work longer hours than other non-family workers. Kurdish workshop-owners can pay their family members and relatives very low wages, or sometimes, they cannot pay at all. Therefore, Kurdish self-employment in the textile sector may bring the issue of domestic exploitation. While the welfare levels of self-employed Kurdish households might increase over time, individual well-being of the family members might seriously diminish at the expense of the solidarity.

As the literature indicates, some recent tensions in terms of political imaginaries, material expectations and everyday lifestyles have emerged between the Kurdish poor and new Kurdish middle-class supporting the HDP in the metropolises (Küçük, 2018, 2019). As a result of the forced migration and rapid urbanization processes, while most Kurds experienced proletarianization, a small Kurdish middle-class has emerged in the metropolises, While the former demands equality, the latter demands freedom (Küçük, 2019, p. 15). Similar to this condition, I observed in the fieldwork that most significant division between the Kurdish proletariat and Kurdish employers (middle-class) has occurred not because of political reasons but because of diverging economic resources. At this juncture, the full story of Remzi, who is a keen supporter of the HDP and regular attendant of the party activities in Bağcılar, is worth mentioning, because his story reflects multiple processes – i.e. rapid

urbanization, upward mobility, perception of class divisions, family and kinship networks, communal solidarity, political patronage and sunk cost fallacy.

Remzi, in his early 50s, is from a small town of Silvan, Diyarbakır. In the 1990s, after his village was burned down, he had no options but to migrate to the city center of Silvan. He worked as a tobacco farmer for a long time. In the 2000, as a result of the erosion of rural subsistence with the neoliberal policies, he and his family left working in tobacco farming. He praised the days he was cultivating tobacco, saying that he made good money back then. Then, Remzi became a seasonal migrant worker in Istanbul, while his family kept living in Silvan. Remzi worked seasonally in the textiles and constructions and stayed in the bachelor's rooms ("*bekar odaları*") in Istanbul, so that he could save and send some money to his family in Silvan. Remzi and his family permanently migrated to Istanbul in 2010. After their settlement in Bağcılar, he started to work as a subcontracted worker in a cleaning company. In the last three years, he has worked in the *Mycity Ağaoğlu* residence, the luxury apartments for the upper class, in Bahçelievler district. Although he works 6 days a week, he stated that his job is easy. During the daytime, he mops around and cleans dust at regular intervals. Remzi describes his deed as an easy job, but he is still concerned about his subcontract status. He underlined that his workplace and the nature of his cleaning work might change any time soon. His monthly income was 1600 Turkish Liras until a few months ago, but nowadays he earns 1800 TL (as of June 2018). He pays 1300 TL for the rent, which is slightly higher than the average house rent in Bagcilar. He said that his own salary is just enough for the rent and the bills (electricity, fuel, and water). Remzi has two working children. "If they had not worked, we would be screwed up in Istanbul," said Remzi. With the contributions of his children, Remzi saved some money and was able to set

up his own small embroidery workshop recently in Bağcılar. For this workshop, he bought a second-hand embroidery machine, rented a shop on the basement floor, and hired a few workers. However, unfortunately, his entrepreneurship attempt coincided with the period of the economic downturn in 2018. Due to the volatility of exchange rates, the extent of activities in the textile sector in Bağcılar has reduced considerably. Remzi commented that they cannot get any work from the textile companies they were used to work with. During the crisis, they can only get work from the big textile companies of the district, but such companies only look for new workshops when the macroeconomic trends are favorable. Otherwise, the big companies keep working with the same workshops. Even the well-known textile workshops could not have got continuous orders from the big textile companies recently. Many small workshops have stopped the production and went out of business due to the economic crisis in Bağcılar. As a result of this process, Remzi and his family wanted to sell the second-hand machines, which were bought with debt, to compensate the sunk cost. However, they could not find any buyers. They still try their best to pay for the machines, the cost of which has multiplied over time because of the interest rate.

In a hot summer afternoon in 2018, I was chatting with Remzi, Mustafa *başkan* (DBP co-chairman of Bağcılar) and young activists on the terrace of the HDP Bağcılar headquarters. When the young activists left the terrace, only three people of us left behind: me, Remzi, and Mustafa. Then, it became apparent that Remzi was waiting for this calm atmosphere all day to talk with Mustafa, who has a big textile workshop in Bağcılar. Like many others, after forcibly migrating to Istanbul, Mustafa *başkan* became a child worker in textiles in the 1990s. With his own efforts, he was able to establish a little textile workshop in the early 2000s. Owing to

favorable market conditions, Mustafa has expanded his business in the last decade – now he employs more than 20 people in his workshop. Recalling Mustafa's business promises, Remzi asked Mustafa to send them some work because he is on the verge of bankruptcy. Remzi said, "*Başkan*, although you promised that you would send us some piece of work and provide us business connections, you did not. Don't you remember your promises?" Mustafa said that he remembers Remzi's request but no company sends orders. He told that, "If companies start to make profits again, they will look for new workshops. I gave your business card to all the big companies that I work with. But tens of workshops like yours are waiting on the line. These big companies nowadays do not look for new partners and throw these cards in the trash." Mustafa turned towards me and started to explain that all workshops in Bağcılar depend upon main suppliers. He claimed that even his own workshop did not have any orders in the last weeks and thus they suspended the production for a while. However, Remzi did not seem satisfied with Mustafa's explanations and kept insisting on getting work. As the conversation prolonged, Mustafa got bored. In the end, Mustafa got angry and told Remzi that he never promised him anything. Facing with this hard rejection, Remzi became very upset. I tried to settle this conflict as a mediator, but I could not succeed, neither of them listens my soothing suggestions. Later, the three of us waited uneasily for a while, kept smoking cigarettes in silence, and then Remzi left the terrace. A few days later, I saw both Remzi and Mustafa in the party headquarters; but this time they were not sitting together but on different ends of the same terrace.

Remzi's story and his encounter with Mustafa *başkan* point out to the complex class relations among the pro-HDP Kurds in Bağcılar: First, Remzi's story shows that Kurds' potential upward mobility is based on the availability of family-

kinship solidarity. Nonetheless, the story also reveals that resources stemming from family-kinship solidarities depend upon the macro-economic conjuncture. In other words, Kurdish family-kinship solidarities can function smoothly in favorable macro-economic conjuncture. If there is an economic contraction or stagnation, then the informal resources may dry out. In the case of Kurds living in Bağcılar, the downside business cycle in recent years has depleted the economic resources related to the family-kinship solidarities. Moreover, Remzi's story implies that, despite the potential of upward mobility, there are a lot of failing instances. Only some of the Kurdish micro-entrepreneurs are able to keep their business, move upwards in the class hierarchy and improve their welfare in the long run, while others deal with the sunk cost fallacy and go down. Furthermore, Mustafa's promises to send some work to Remzi's workshop and to make him business connections imply the possibility of political patronage around the HDP, in which, despite the scarcity of resources, the common political preference might turn into economic support mechanism. However, as the critical tension between Remzi and Mustafa shows, this type of patronage is indeed limited in the case of pro-HDP Kurds. Sometimes, the limited resources lead to the political-economic tensions between the Kurdish working-class and Kurdish middle-class in the district.

Nevertheless, these tensions are not persistent, as different classes come together in the HDP's platforms. It seems that, for now, HDP keeps its ability to overcome class tensions and mobilize both working-class and middle-class electorate at the same time. Afterall, while poor and working-class are the major constituent of the HDP, the Kurdish middle-class is also critical for the party as well. Despite being few in numbers and despite their fragile status in the face of business cycles and economic contractions, the Kurdish businessmen, tradesmen and shopkeepers (both

bourgeoise and petty bourgeoisie) provide significant resources for the mobilization of the HDP at the local level.

6.4.2 Young-educated Kurdish professional activists

Departing from my interviews and participant observations, in this section I will discuss the primary role of young-educated Kurdish professionals in terms of the resource mobilization of the HDP at the local level. Almost all young-educated Kurdish professionals have university degree (rarely, M.A. or Ph.D. degree) and, in general, pursue careers in the private sector. This group consists of managers, engineers, architects, designers, lawyers, etc. Although young-educated Kurdish activists are few in numbers, they undertake significant administrative positions of the HDP in the metropolis. Instead of the Kurdish working-class executives of the past, the young educated Kurdish activists carry out the administrative burden of the HDP today. It is possible to assert that the young educated Kurds become the primary human resource of the party in Bağcılar.

For making participant observations among young-educated Kurds, I worked in the information technology and processing (from now on, I call it IT) section in the HDP's Bağcılar organization for more than two years. Each district organization of the HDP has its own IT section, and these sections work in cooperation with each other and under the supervision of the IT department of the HDP's Istanbul main organization. Like other party activists, the IT members are expected to perform multiple tasks before and during the election periods. The IT members usually stay in the party's headquarters to manage the party operations by phone and/or via WhatsApp, to keep and update the contact lists of activists and members on the main computers, to install and update necessary online programs and applications for

monitoring elections, to manage the e-mail and social media accounts of the party, to announce the regular party meetings and activities to the party members and voters. Especially, the IT sections play a very significant role in leading the local organization in the election days, managing the party's neighborhood-school representatives who are responsible for monitoring the elections on the ground and ensuring the reliability and transparency of the general and local elections in their districts. Recently, the IT sections have become much more significant with the allegations of fraud and irregularities in elections, because it is the duty of the IT members to control and record the final reports signed by the electoral committees. As an integral part of the party's local administrative body in Bağcılar, the IT heads and members often participate in the HDP's closed executive meetings, in which primary issues and agendas of the local organization and the strategies and resources of mobilization are discussed. Hence, the IT section is one of the most decisive actors in the HDP Bağcılar.

In the last 5 years, the IT section of the HDP Bağcılar has consisted of two core members and five-or-six supporting members. One of the core members is the leader of the IT, Cavit, who is indeed exceptionally talented and has strong leadership qualities. He works as a regional distributor of a famous food brand, and therefore he earns above-average income in Bağcılar. Cavit could not continue his university study because of economic reasons in the past, as he was one of many children of a forcibly migrated Kurdish family and had to work since his childhood years. He spends all his spare time –except working-hours– for the party duties and activities. Another core member of the IT section is Canan, who is also the executive board member of the HDP Bağcılar. Thanks to her industrial engineering career, she earns well above the average income in Bağcılar. Despite her forced migration

background, she continued her education and got her bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering from Balıkesir University. Canan is a candidate for the emerging Kurdish middle-class in Bağcılar. She works in a logistics department of a private company. Like Cavit, Canan also spends most of her spare time in the HDP headquarters in Bağcılar. Cavit and Canan call for other supporting members during the electoral campaign periods and in the election days. The number of supporting members vary from one election to others, but all the supporting members are closely related with the HDP's local organization. Some supporting members of the IT section of the HDP Bağcılar are Bawer (software programmer and web developer), Behram (religion teacher in private school, MA degree from a private university), Büşra (graphic designer, student in private university), Çetin (sales manager in private company, undergrad degree in management), Ferhat (self-employed lawyer), Kamuran (academic, Ph.D. degree in anthropology from Columbia University) and myself (Ph.D. candidate in Political Science). Except for myself, all the supporting IT member are Kurdish, and most of them speak Kurdish fluently.

Although the supporting IT members have different skills and work in different sectors, one condition remains the same regarding the supporting members: all of them are university graduates. They are all qualified in terms of human capital, they have sufficient computer knowledge and skills, most have a good command of Microsoft Excel (which is very significant for keeping thousands of records), often knows second-language (except Turkish/Kurdish), etc. Including myself, all IT heads and member are inclined towards middle-class lifestyles: we occasionally meet in central districts like Taksim or Kadıköy for having a few drinks and having "fun night," we take vacations in seasides such as Antalya, Bodrum, and Bozcaada, some of us go camping with their Decathlon t-shirts, trousers and tents to countryside near

Istanbul (such as İğneada, Kıyıköy and Ballıkayalar) in spare times, etc. Nonetheless, young-educated Kurdish professionals do not ascribe themselves popular middle-class connotations. In particular, the IT members who are more or less familiar with the "white-collar professional culture" (which is pejoratively called "*plaza kültürü*" in Turkish) widespread among the middle-classes in Turkey declare that they try to avoid consumerism and degeneration peculiar to the Turkish middle-class.

As a member of the IT, I took part in various operations such as registering members, updating the lists of members, counting, and recounting of votes, and registering the election results into the party's online system in three electoral periods. As it is discussed, the IT's role becomes most significant in the election days as they try to prevent potential irregularities and frauds. Therefore, during the election days, the IT staff work in close cooperation with the HDP's lawyers on the ground. In the election days, the pro-HDP lawyers visit all ballot boxes and drive around all schools and neighborhoods to ensure the safety of votes. In evaluating the messages and phone calls of the neighborhood-school representatives on the ground, the IT members in the headquarters direct lawyers to the specific localities to fix problems. Nevertheless, it is necessary to underline that the actual groundwork is performed by the party's neighborhood-school representatives, who mostly consist of the Kurdish working-class.

While IT members together with some other administrative staff guiding the election process from their desks in the headquarters, the Kurdish representatives and activists, who have generally working-class backgrounds, watch the ballot-boxes all day long, participate in the counting of votes and deliver the copy of election result reports to the party headquarters in the late hours at night. Apart from election periods, in a similar fashion, it is the Kurdish working-class activists who perform

the organizational activities and routines of the HDP on the ground. While the young educated Kurdish professionals mostly conduct administrative operations and decision-making processes from their desks in the headquarters, Kurdish working-class activists of all ages do the recruitment and mobilization work, put posters and stickers all around neighborhoods, carve out and decorate the streets with the HDP symbols, etc. The strong presence of the HDP has been achieved through the efforts of Kurdish working-class activists.

The young educated Kurdish professionals, who undertake the administrative work, sometimes lose their organic ties with the Kurdish electorate – especially with the poor Kurdish voters. It is possible to contend that the division of labor between the young educated Kurdish activists and the Kurdish working-class activists in the HDP's organization in Bağcılar resembles Marx's distinction between mental and manual labor. Therefore, sometimes, Kurdish working-class criticize the HDP's officials for not engaging with their real problems and accuse the HDP with conducting "saloon politics" and (Üstündağ & Yörük, 2014; Küçük, 2019). The political tensions between the upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments undertaking the mental labor and the Kurdish working-class undertaking manual labor have sometimes become apparent in the everyday encounters in the party headquarters. Sometimes, I observed that different classes of party members and visitors are sitting in separate groups during the tea hours and informal conversation sessions. For instance, while we were chatting with young educated Kurds, sometimes (uneducated) Kurdish workers want to engage in our conversation, but a few minutes later, he felt being alienated from our "abstract" language. In election days, the IT staff requested from other working-class activists not to enter our own office room (which is filled with laptops, desktop computers and monitors) in order to prevent

disturbance and noise. However, in many instances, I noticed that some Kurdish working-class felt being excluded with this measure. A Kurdish working-class interviewee commented that "the educated segment becomes arrogant in the election days and party meetings, and they don't want to hear our voice." Similarly, Ekrem (60, Kurdish *mele,* Bitlis) commented that,

> Nowadays, the party pays attention to leftists, LGBTs, minorities and all those educated people, but it becomes deaf towards its real electorate. The party does not want to hear the poor religious Kurdish electorate. We are indeed the real electorate of this party, but sometimes we feel estranged from its decision-making bodies. Our representation is limited.

As it is seen in these anecdotes, the Kurdish working-class activists, who work in burdensome manual jobs for making a living and undertake the manual operations of the HDP on the ground, sometimes feel alienated from the party's administrative body and decisions. As much as the young educated Kurds' perspective outweighs the expectations and demands of the working-class, the class-based contradictions within the party becomes much more apparent. Üstündağ and Yörük's (2015) field study also confirms these class-based contradictions within the HDP; there is a rupture between the middle-class politics (which connotes symbolic protest politics) and everyday aspirations of the working-class electorate in Istanbul. Üstündağ and Yörük (2015) underscore that the HDP's poor Kurdish electorate are not satisfied with the performance of the party and think that the party does not sufficiently address their actual problems – such as unemployment, insecurity, urban transformation, and discrimination.[186]

In addition to these class-based contradictions, there is another tension in the HDP's organization in Bağcılar, which occurs between the young-educated Kurdish

[186] According to Üstündağ and Yörük (2015), Kurdish poor demand solid social projects from the HDP, such as neighborhood solidarity houses, soup kitchens, daycare centers, educational organizations.

activists and the old generation of political officials, who are sometimes directly appointed by the Kurdish movement. Despite their charismatic appeals, ideological commitment and militant attitudes, the old cadre has become ineffective and begun to be replaced by the educated young Kurdish activists in Bağcılar. It is because most members of the old cadre are not as flexible as the young educated Kurdish activists and hence could not respond to the rapidly changing agendas of national and local politics. In addition, the old cadre lack the computer (and smartphone) skills necessary for the instant everyday operations of the party; they become "powerless" because contemporary political activism relies more and more on online platforms and networking. In the election periods, I noticed that the old cadre members had hard times in downloading, learning, and managing the HDP's mobile apps designed for registering election results. I observed that, in many instances, the old cadre frequently asked help from young activists in setting online networks (e.g. WhatsApp), sending messages and emails online, projecting their slides and presentations, etc. In spreading the issue positions of the party to the mass electorate, the online platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, become very significant. Moreover, I observed that while the old cadre often keep using old-school methods (pens and notebooks), almost all young-educated activists (consisting mostly IT members) used their mobile phones, tablets and laptops for making and organizing their agendas. In considering their IT-based skills, the young-educated activists are likely to have higher capabilities than the old generation. In this regard, young educated Kurds have increasingly undertaken the roles of the old cadre in the HDP's local organization in Bağcılar. One could posit that the replacement of old-cadre with the young educated Kurdish activists is an inevitable

phenomenon, because younger generation are more flexible and adaptive to the ever-shifting challenges of the new era of information-based politics.

At this juncture, it is also necessary to discuss other explicit differences between the two groups. While the old cadre of officials and activists tend to have working-class backgrounds and live in (relatively) poor conditions, the young educated Kurdish activists tend to have professional careers, prefer middle-classized lifestyles, recreational activities, and consumption patterns. For instance, it is very probable that on the weekends, while the old generation spend time with their families, go to coffeehouses and wander around Bağcılar, the young educated Kurdish activists go to Kadıköy, Beyoğlu, Şişli and other central districts for having good time, socializing with their friends or shopping. Moreover, while the old cadre has more organic ties with the Kurdish movement and long-lasting relations with the working-class populace in neighborhoods of Bağcılar, the young educated Kurdish activists have fluctuating relations with the party-movement and have weak ties with the Kurdish poor. Last but not least, while the old cadre officials went through intense ideological indoctrination and prefer to refer "the leadership" of Öcalan ("*önderlik*" in Turkish, "*serok*" in Kurdish) in their political discourses, the young educated Kurdish activists do not prioritize the central doctrines of the PKK but emphasize democracy, human rights, freedom of expression. These differences between the old-cadre of working-class officials and young educated Kurdish activists reveal the existing and potential class-based tensions within the HDP organization in Bağcılar. Nevertheless, despite all existing and potential tensions, the young educated Kurdish activists become an indispensable resource – may be the most significant human capital– of the HDP in the urban context.

6.4.3 Kinship networks behind the Kurdish movement and HDP

Kinship networks can be considered as significant intermediaries in terms of the resource mobilization of the HDP in Bağcılar. The significance of Kurdish tribal and kinship networks was discussed by many sociologists and historians.[187] It is a well-known fact that the rightist conservative parties in Turkey resorted to the traditional community (*hemşehrilik*) and kinship networks for electoral mobilization. Likewise, the pro-Islamist parties widely made use of kinship networks of poor migrants in establishing clientelist machines in urban peripheries in the 1990s and 2000s. Nonetheless, sometimes kinship networks have become useful for alternative (counter-hegemonic) mobilizations. For instance, Belge (2011) suggests that "kinship bonds constituted an impressive challenge to the government's efforts to transform the Kurdish people into loyal and obedient Turkish citizen" (p. 109). Following Belge, it is possible to argue the kinship morality and relations among the Kurdish communities sometimes turn into the resistance repertoire against the state's assimilationist policies. In this section, I will discuss how kinship networks become a significant resource for the pro-Kurdish mobilization of the HDP at the local level.

In a survey study on the political attitudes of Istanbulites with 4.006 respondents, Secor (2005) finds out that generalized social trust among the Istanbul population is indeed incredibly low. "It is possible that low levels of generalized social trust represent the flip side of high levels of inter-personal trust within networks and communities." Among Istanbulites, 86% reported to thrust the kinship networks, and 53% reported to thrust the neighborhood networks (Secor 2005, 72). Similarly, in the case of Bağcılar, kinship bonds and networks are (or used to be) powerful among the pro-HDP Kurdish society, because presumably family and

[187] For some notable examples, see Yalçın-Heckmann (1991) and Bruinessen (1992).

kinship were the only remaining resource for most dissident Kurds after the forced migration. While rightist Kurds could make use of other resources, such as village guardianship, the clientelistic resources and the benefits of Islamic communities and tariqats, the dissident Kurds (supporting the HDP today) were devoid of such resources in the past. In other words, as a result of the forced migration and dispossession processes, the dissident Kurdish migrants had no option but to reconstruct and rely on their kinship bonds and networks for surviving in the city.

The Kurdish movement-party considers this condition as an opportunity. As a matter of fact, Romano (2006) underscored that "the Kurdish nationalist movement" from foundational years onwards has utilized the "already existing kinship networks" (pp. 95-96). For the Kurdish movement, kinship networks and village communities became the primary organizational resource. This is in line with the fact that "contentious politics needs dense networks of relations to support massive recruitment" (della Porta, 2017, p. 455). Likewise, in order to mobilize existing electorate and recruit new members, the pro-Kurdish parties have often used "dense" kinship networks. In my fieldwork, I observed that the HDP's local organization relies upon particular kinship networks. To be more accurate, kinship networks from particular villages and towns of Bitlis are very influential in the HDP's organization in Bağcılar. As one pro-HDP Kurdish interviewee puts it, an influential family and kin member supporting the Kurdish movement-party could determine the political preference of other family and kin members – thus whole kin members might vote for the HDP. Before both the 2015 and the 2018 general elections, I made participant observations in the HDP's election preparations: while checking the lists of HDP's official members and neighborhood representatives, who are responsible for supervising ballot boxes, I noticed that dozens of them have the same last name.

When I asked whether this pattern is coincidence or not, I learned that they are indeed from the same village – i.e. *Kundus* in Bitlis. The kin members of *Kundus* have had shared life stories and similar migration experiences; more probably, interactions and socialization within their kinship network have influenced the political decisions of all members.

My following participant observations confirm this hypothesis: In general, I realized that when one HDP official want to reach a member from the Bitlis community for informing and inviting him/her to party congresses, meetings and activities, his/her relatives (or co-villagers) immediately call this person by phone. For example, while the HDP co-chairman taking attendance of hundreds of party members in the general meeting held before the June 2015 general elections in the headquarters, I witnessed that the participants immediately responded to the call of attendance by counting which of their relatives were in the city and which of their relatives were in their villages for the summer vacation. The kin members help the HDP executives by facilitating the communication within the party. The Bitlisian kin members frequently call each other by phone about the party issues. In this regard, kinship bonds and colocality ties function like an intra-party network for the HDP.

In another instance, I witnessed how the HDP's local event turns into an informal meeting for hundreds of Kurdish kin members as follows: Before the 2018 general elections, the HDP organized a concert and festival in the Çınar neighborhood of Bağcılar. This event became some sort of reunion day for the distant relatives, kin members and colocals from Bitlis who had not seen each other for some time. During the festival, I observed dozens of kin members who gathered in the square sincerely shook their hands and hugged each other. Especially the distant relatives who had not seen each other because of the long working days and

busy work schedules started deep conservations. Instead of listening to the concert and political speeches, the kin members preferred to chat with each other. As it is seen in this instance, on the one hand, the HDP utilizes already existing kinship bonds for mobilization at the local level, and on the other hand, these kinship networks are reproduced through the HDP mediums, meetings and activities.

It is possible to suggest that among the pro-HDP Kurdish community in Bağcılar, existing kinship bonds are still stronger than the newly established relationships (such as neighborhood ties) in the urban context. Especially, traditional Kurdish segments (i.e. old generation) give special importance to the reproduction of kinship bonds and networks, which have several secondary benefits like socialization, politicization, finding jobs, establishing business, borrowing money, etc. In fact, many studies underline that informal welfare regime based on kinship and colocality compensate the limitations of the formal welfare regime (and exclusionary social policies) in Turkey (Keyder, 2005; Kurtoğlu, 2012; Soytemel, 2013). In an ethnographic study conducted in Güngören, the neighboring district to Bağcılar, Çınar (2012) depicts that kinship networks create considerable informal employment opportunities for migrant women. Migrant women in the Güngören neighborhoods are able to get home-based work primarily through their kinship, *hemşehri* and friendship relations.

Perouse (2016) argues that Kurdish migrants "try to find work and accommodation most often by resorting to grassroots networks at the level of village or province they come from rather than through some hypothetical Kurdish generic networks too large and loose to be efficient." He further claims that each district of Istanbul has different Kurdish community: Kurds from Adıyaman live in Sultangazi; Kurds from Bingöl live in Sultanbeyli; Kurds from Ardahan live in Esenyurt; Kurds

from Muş live in Arnavutköy; Kurds from Mardin live in Zeytinburnu; Kurds Malatya and Iğdır live in Başakşehir; Kurds of Bitlis and Siirt live in Bağcılar. As I discussed before, Kurdish kinship networks from Siirt have dominated the wholesale fruit-and-vegetable market (*hal* in Turkish) in Bayrampaşa, the neighboring district of Bağcılar in the eastern axis. Siirtian Kurds have created their own pocket economy in the *hal*. In the interview, the pro-HDP Kurdish salesmen of Siirt origin asserted that the *hal* function as an epicenter for their mobility: Some of them leave their sales business for a while and move to other sectors for a couple of months with the expectations of making more money. By relying upon kinship solidarity, numerous Kurdish households have established their own business in Bağcılar– especially brothers and cousins came together and established textile workshops in the 1990s.

Another mechanism that facilitates the functioning of the kinship networks is the (aforementioned) familial social reproduction within the Kurdish community in Bağcılar. In the quantitative chapter, it is shown that the pro-HDP Kurds have (often) a larger household size than the pro-AKP Kurds. This condition implies that the number of working-members and total household income tend be higher for the pro-HDP Kurds. Even a slight increase in the household size might translate into more effective use of extended family and kinship networks for solidarity and reciprocity; thus, the pro-HDP Kurds could be able reach more resources compared to the pro-AKP Kurds. It is possible to argue that, by generating solidarity and reciprocity, the kinship networks produce both economic and social capital among the Kurdish community. Besides their material aspect, the kinship networks have moral aspect by "providing practical and emotional support, giving access to social information, providing a sense of community and security as well as an opportunity to reproduce

one's linguistic and cultural heritage, and facilitating access to further networks and opportunities, including some employment opportunities" (Cederberg, 2012, p. 63).

Nevertheless, some pro-HDP Kurdish informants suggest that their kinship networks are not as much effective as before. The new urban relations (e.g. friendship or neighborship) sometimes overshadow the traditional role of the extended family and kinship relations. Through an ethnographic study among the poor migrants in the deprived neighborhoods of Istanbul (Galata and Haliç), Soytemel (2013) suggests that "small informal group contacts in neighborhood level are more effective [today] than other generalized – ethnic and kinship – networks" (p. 83). It is possible to contend that sometimes the intrusion of capitalist relations into Kurdish communities have made the kinship networks futile. As it is seen in the previous example of Kurdish workers, who left their families' and relatives' textile workshops and started to work in the construction sector outside for gaining higher wages, the capitalist motivations surpass the communal belongings. It seems that the older generation of Kurdish migrants, whose ages are over 50, are more likely to maintain the kinship relations for "protectionist" reasons in the urban context, while the second generation (i.e. their children) are more likely to prefer better prospects (higher wages) instead of communal solidarity. In this sense, the second-generation Kurdish migrants are more oriented towards "the spirit of capitalism" (Weber, 2002).

While the second-generation Kurdish migrants often adopt some sort of class consciousness and raise their materialist demands in the face of inequalities and injustices of urban capitalism, the old generation Kurdish migrants predominantly emphasize ethnic-identity demands due to their direct experience of the war, violence and trauma (Kılıçarslan, 2015). In this regard, the first-generation Kurdish migrants are more interested in the reproducing ethnic-kinship identity in the city. At this

juncture, it should also be noted that the HDP addresses and mobilizes the first-generation migrants easier than the second generation (especially, Kurdish youth) in the district. Because the party comfortably articulates the ethnic discourses in everyday life, whereas it does not satisfy the materialist demands.

A young Kurdish textile worker, Cengiz (32, Bitlis), who works in his relatives' textile workshop, suggested that the HDP must first and foremost address the worsening conditions of the working-class youth in the city if it wants to receive more support. He compared his work environment in the workshop to a prison life: "Our work is just like prison. It is very isolated. You enter the workshop at 8 a.m. and exit there at 8 p.m. In the meantime, you are not aware of what's happening outside." Most of the work in the textile workshops involve routine and repetitive operations. Cengiz's narrative uncovers the experience of alienation (from production, own labor and outside world) of the Kurdish manual workers. Cengiz said that, "I don't care about the textile business [of my relatives], I don't care what others tell about my own life anymore. If I've better options, I'll quit." His remarks show the limitations of kinship solidarity.

Despite these limitations and contradictions, it is possible to argue that one of the most significant resources of the HDP' at the local level is the kinship networks, which is complemented by the extended family organization. There is a two-way relationship between the party and kinship networks, which means they both feed each other. On the one hand, the HDP makes use of the Kurdish kinship networks, and kin members determine the political preferences of each other in these networks. On the other hand, the kinship networks are maintained and reproduced through the party mediums (meetings and activities) at the local level. Consequently, the successful mobilization of the HDP among the Kurdish electorate depends on its

ability to utilize already existing networks based on ethnicity, kinship and family at the local level.

6.4.4 Intellectual and cultural capital

It is shown that the pro-HDP Kurds are more educated (on average) than the pro-AKP Kurds in the Bağcılar and Istanbul samples. Especially the percentage of those with undergraduate and graduate degrees are higher for the pro-HDP Kurds. Higher education means qualified human capital, which is an important asset for any movement-party. In addition, I argue that the young educated Kurdish activists today effectively undertake the administrative burden of the HDP in Bağcılar. In addition to these two conditions, the support of leftist-intellectuals to the party and local Kurdish community is significant in terms of resource mobilization.

As movement literature indicates, contentious movements-parties emerge, first, when opportunities are opening in the political system, and second, when the elite and intellectual allies support the movements' issues and struggle. In both local and national levels, the HDP have leftist, Marxist, and feminist intellectual allies – despite their "elite" status is in question. The intellectuals' support for the HDP is presumably related to the Marxist background and radical democratic articulations of the Kurdish movement. In contrast to the religious-conservative identity of the party's mass electorate, the HDP leaders mostly have leftist and secular identities. The critical perspectives provided by the party leaders and intellectual allies become an important cultural capital. To put another way, the leaders' and intellectuals' critical thinking shape the party's habitus. As a social-movement party, the HDP Bağcılar has many intellectual allies – including academics, writers, artists, and feminists. The intellectual candidates nominated by the HDP in Bağcılar has often

come to the district to participate in rallies and meetings. During my fieldwork in Bağcılar between 2015 and 2018, Ayşe Berktay (well-known writer, translator, and activist), Turgut Öker (the ex-president of the Federation of Alevi Associations), Ali Kenanoğlu (the director of Alevi associations in Istanbul), Züleyha Gülüm (well-known feminist attorney), Hüda Kaya (famous activist known for her efforts against the headscarf ban in the 1990s) have several times visited Bağcılar and met with the Kurdish electorate. It is possible to suggest that the socialist, communist, anarchist, feminist and environmentalist articulations of the intellectual allies have led to the dissemination of ethnopolitical awareness, oppressed-class consciousness, and critical discourses among the party's Kurdish electorate.

In my visits to the HDP headquarters and offices in Bağcılar, I often witnessed political and intellectual discussions among party members and visitors. Sometimes ordinary talks and mundane conversations immediately turn into heated political debates among the participants. I often attempted to involve in these debates for making participant observations. As one may expect, the 30-year long politicization of Kurds within the Kurdish movement (and the pro-Kurdish party tradition) have raised the theoretical level of these debates. It is not surprising to see that ordinary Kurds easily make abstractions and give theoretical references, such as, to "the modern nation-state," "the assimilationist policies," "identity politics," "universal human rights," etc. Despite the fact that many veteran officials (old cadre) of the HDP are haunted by the Öcalan's paradigm, the young-educated activists and other younger members are able to discuss wide-ranging issues –such as capitalism, poverty, class, feminism, environmentalism, human rights, etc.- from different perspectives. Once in the party headquarters, I involved into a discussion with the Kurdish youth on the question of becoming and being revolutionary: which

possessions a true revolutionary should leave behind, whether there is a room for love and emotions on the way for revolution, the morality of being martyr and so on.

During the fieldwork, I noticed that the "other" HDK components (People's Democratic Congress) also facilitate the intellectual atmosphere in the party platforms at the local level. Among the HDK components, there are significant parties and associations of the leftist and feminist movements in Turkey – e.g. ESP, EMEP, and SODAP (Socialist Solidarity Platform). In the case of HDP Bağcılar, the ESP is the most organized socialist party among the Kurdish workers and the "comrades" from ESP are very influential in turning the direction of the party to the socialist axis.

The media literacy is an important factor in the rise of culture capital among the pro-HDP Kurds in Bağcılar. It is possible to contend that the pro-HDP Kurds watch the country's political agenda very closely through TV channels and newspapers, presumably, because of their ethnopolitical awareness and oppressed-class consciousness. However, while watching and reading the news, they are not only interested in the "Kurdish issue" but try to follow different subjects – including economy, foreign affairs, environment, feminism, etc. Especially the young Kurdish activists of the party seem to be attracted to critical articulations in the alternative media platforms (such as *Gazete Duvar* and *T24*), as many of them stated that they often read leftist commentators and columnists such as Fehim Taştekin, İrfan Aktan, Ruşen Çakır, Ümit Kıvanç, Ahmet İnsel, Mete Çubukçu, etc. An activist of the HDP Bağcılar told that "keeping an eye on the repertoire of the oppressed must be the essential duty of each and every Kurdish party member." Most Kurdish activists believe that their party should be the voice of all oppressed, marginalized and excluded minorities in Turkey.

The HDP Bağcılar distributes hundreds of journals and magazines - especially the issues of *Demokratik Modernite* and *Jinoloji* – that are delivered to the party headquarters to its members and visitors. These magazines are distributed free of charge. Sometimes even the issues of other leftist/socialist magazines are distributed. In my visits to the party headquarters, I noticed that two issues of *Express* magazine, which consist the interviews with Selahattin Demirtaş and Ertuğrul Kürkçü, were distributed. More importantly, the party activists read the pro-Kurdish newspapers of *Özgür Gündem* (today *Yeni Yaşam*) and, if possible, *Yeni Özgür Politika* on a regular basis. It is necessary to underline that the *Özgür Gündem* has been one of the most significant venues in the reproduction of Kurdish political identity since the 1990s (Bayram, 2011). *Özgür Gündem* had been established with a clear mission – i.e. becoming the voice of oppressed Kurds who were exposed to violence in the 1990s in eastern and southeastern Turkey. *Özgür Gündem* has been censored and banned many times since the 1990s, but it has managed to survive with other names until today. *Özgür Gündem* has become an outstanding example for the subsequent Kurdish media, particularly for the Dicle News Agency (*DİHA*) and Jin News Agency (*JİNHA*) and has guided two-generations of Kurdish politicians and activists. Along with *Özgür Gündem*, *Med TV*[188] (the first pro-Kurdish TV channel) has become very influential in the construction of the Kurdish ethnopolitical identity (Avcı, 2018). *Özgür Gündem* and *Med TV* have become the cornerstones of the Kurdish media tradition. Many pro-HDP Kurdish informants claimed that they did not trust any other media platforms. Especially they do not trust to the mainstream

[188] Med TV and its successorts can be considered as the official media representative of the Kurdish movement. Med TV was founded in 1995 and censored and closed down in 1999. Its successors are Medya TV, Roj TV, Nuçe TV and Med Nuçe TV. Today, currently broadcasting TV channels affiliated with the Kurdish movement are Sterk TV, Medya Haber, Ronahi TV and Jin TV.

media, which is assumed to be representing the official Turkish state discourse and distorting the Kurdish issue.

For the pro-HDP Kurdish informants, if the Kurdish newspapers and TV channels have not existed, it would have been difficult to understand the extent of human rights violations in the region. They stated that not only Kurdish dissidents but also Turkish leftists living in Istanbul are able to catch up what is really happening in the region through the Kurdish media. Almost in each and every one of my visits to the HDP Bağcılar headquarters, I noticed that the 55-inch television on the main hall was always turned on and some party members continuously kept watching the news or discussion programs on *İMC TV* or *Med Nuçe-Sterk TV*.[189] It is possible to state that, the pro-HDP Kurds, young and old alike, have been highly politicized through the Kurdish and alternative media frames in the face of increasing repression of the AKP government in the last decade.[190]

Regarding the media literacy vis-à-vis cultural capital, it is necessary to remember that the pro-HDP Kurds are (relatively) more educated than the pro-AKP Kurds in Istanbul and Bağcılar. In the case of the pro-HDP Kurds in Bağcılar, education brings a critical perspective and this critical perspective orients them towards more education. At the same time, education provides individual autonomy and self-confidence for the pro-HDP Kurds. For most pro-HDP Kurds, being educated in the urban context means maintaining lives independent of the AKP's

[189] IMC TV was a libertarian and multicultural TV channel, which aim to reach all minorities in Turkey. With a government decree under the OHAL rule, the TV was shut down by the government with the claim of "supporting the terrorist organization." In the same period, Özgür Gün TV, Azadi TV, Jiyan TV, DİHA, JİNHA, Azadiya Welat newspaper were also shut down by the government.
[190] In my interview with Zeki, the driver of the HDP's panelvan used for election campaigns, he complained that his 10 years-old kid obsessively follow what is happening by constantly watching the news channel. He told that, "Nowadays, as I am busy with politics, so I cannot keep an eye on my son. When I come to the home, I often catch him watching the news on TV." Especially, after the recent clashes [i.e. the ditches in Sur, Diyarbakır], his son began to follow the news very closely. Sometimes he even skips his classes to stay at home and watch the news. Zeki told that, while watching the news on TV yesterday, his son asked him why the government kept Demirtaş in prison.

clientelistic relations or other Islamic networks. Many pro-HDP Kurds believe that their children must get an education in order to be independent individuals and for not being passive recipients of AKP's "charities" like the "pro-systemic Kurds" today. Thus, they often push their current financial limits to provide their children with better education opportunities. In the interviews with the HDP's Kurdish supporters, individual autonomy, self-development, and self-confidence through the means of education (especially of their children) emerge as significant subjects. It is a well-known fact that ethnopolitical identities are not stable but continuously reconstructed. Departing from this fact, it is possible to argue that the Kurdish identity formation is positively correlated with increasing access to education.

In the last decade, the HDP has facilitated the establishment of numerous youth arts-and-culture centers in peripheral districts such as Bağcılar, Esenyurt, Avcılar, etc. In these pro-Kurdish culture centers, Kurdish children and youth enroll in free courses provided by the Kurdish activists in the areas of painting, creative writing, playing guitar, drama, and theatre, etc. These culture centers replicate the successful model developed by the Mesopotamia Culture Center, which was founded in 1991 in Beyoğlu, Istanbul, for conserving and disseminating Kurdish arts and culture. The most influential pro-Kurdish culture center in Bağcılar is the *Renkler* Culture and Arts House in Bağcılar. For the time being, there are several activities for youth in the *Renkler*: graphic illustration and painting courses, biweekly sessions for watching and discussing (political) movies, literature days and the nights for reciting poetry, panels and meetings (e.g. on women's rights and feminism). In an interview, the founders of the *Renkler* center stated that they aim to empower the artistic voices in peripheral localities against the elitist art of the capitalist-class

located in the urban center of Istanbul.[191] *Renkler* strives to represent the working-class arts and the street arts with amateurish spirit.

Even though the pro-Kurdish culture centers have little funding, as they depend on the donations of the activist-participants, they are able to attract dozens of Kurdish children and youth in Bağcılar and in other peripheral districts. These centers aim for, on the one hand, enabling Kurdish youth and children to acquire critical cultural perspective and artistic taste, on the other hand, preventing the spread of devastating addictions (such as bonsai) among them. In addition, these centers help to transfer Kurdish arts, especially "*strans*" and "*dengbej"* tradition, to the next generation. As a side-effect, the young participants of these centers adopt political consciousness as they take their dissident Kurdish "brothers/sisters" as role models.

Finally, related to the cultural capital, the democratic values and human rights discourses are widely articulated among the ordinary Kurdish voters of the HDP. Kurdish movement's theoretical agenda in the macro-level – including democratic autonomy as well as pro-feminism – have been adopted by the pro-HDP Kurds in Bağcılar. Almost all Kurdish activist interviewees attracted attention to the urgent need for grassroots democracy (with an emphasis on the democratic and participatory organizations at the local scale) and praised democratic ideals and pro-feminist organizations of the Kurdish movement. Similar to other branches of the party, the HDP Bağcılar have been practicing the democratic/pro-feminist agenda of the Kurdish movement for a long time: one of the co-chairs of the local organization

[191] The founders of the *Renkler* center describe their goal follows: "Our perspective as well as art works are inevitably political. We do not want a type of youth who only look at life through the window of [the pro-Turkish capitalist] system. We produce an alternative [production] flow and try to exhibit our production. Youth support our production. We do not produce the works that the system demands from us. Here we try to prove that working-class people or ordinary people from the streets can produce artworks. This inevitably leads us to the dissident position." (Evrensel, 2016)

must be woman; there must be equal number of women and men – or the number of women may be more than men – in each and every assembly in the local organization; the party tries to limit the domination of men in party meetings and activities. For instance, I often realized that, when the female co-chair of the Bağcılar branch, Emine, starts speaking about her ideas on party matters, the male members straight themselves up and listen to her with great attention.

In conclusion, intellectual and cultural capital are not only significant assets for the pro-HDP Kurds (in terms of upward mobility) but also critical resources of the HDP (in terms of political mobilization) in Bağcılar. Especially the support of intellectual allies, their socialist, communist, anarchist and feminist articulations, the critical thinking within the party circles, the media literacy and increasing access to education are vital components of resource mobilization of the HDP in Bağcılar.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the linkages and articulations of the HDP at the local level with reference to social movement and movement-party literatures. I used three levels of analysis: identity/cultural frames, space-making and resource mobilization.

Departing from my interviews and participant observations, I showed that the communal grievances and relative deprivation (RD) lead Kurdish electorate towards the HDP. The party successfully catalyzes and represents the Kurdish grievances and RD, especially of those upwardly-mobile segments in Istanbul. The Kurdish RD is not only about the former experiences (war, violence and migration) but also about the current experience of capitalist injustices and inequalities in the urban context – such that as much as Kurdish voters compare their socioeconomic status with others (especially, better-off pro-AKP Turks), they become more dissident.

However, the relationship between the RD and the contentious politics is not one-directional but reciprocal. Functioning both as an expressive and constitutive medium of Kurdish resistance, the HDP facilitates the articulation of hard feelings and grievances. The party carries out the Kurdish political tradition and the repertoires of Kurdish resistance. In this sense, the party platforms become "counter-hegemonic public spaces" for Kurdish voters to reflect upon their (past and current) feelings of grievances and RD. Besides, the HDP headquarters and offices in Bağcılar function as "free spaces," in which the Kurdish electorate socialize with each other. By recalling their traumatized but resistant memories or by expressing their hardships, Kurdish voters can heal their wounds themselves in the party spaces.

In the second level of analysis (space-making), I discussed that the pro-Kurdish space-making practices in everyday life, which can especially be attributed the performances of Kurdish activists, become very significant for the HDP's mobilization in Bağcılar. Kurdish dissidents have imprinted their existence over the district since the 1990s. In general, pro-Kurdish space-making connotes the creation of autonomous and emancipatory spaces (both in physical and discursive terms) and the reconstruction of "communal ghettos" (such as Demirkapı neighborhood) for Kurdish people. I argue that pro-Kurdish space-making is not only influential in political terms but also in social-economic terms. The spatial concentration of Kurdish population in particular localities has provided them communal solidarity and comparative economic advantage (i.e. dominating certain occupational sectors/zones and constructing pocket economies). In addition, I underlined that one of the most striking symbols of the Kurdish space-making is the pro-Kurdish Shafii masjids in the district. These masjids are directly affiliated with the Kurdish movement and the HDP. The Kurdish *mele*s and communities of these masjids have

become visible in the party circles in the last decade. In this respect, the HDP's spatial re-appropriation of Islam through the masjids and the *mele* organization (DİK and DİAYDER) become influential on the Kurdish electorate.

In the third level of analysis (resource mobilization), I discussed that the economic, human and cultural capital of the upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments are very important for the party. I attracted attention to two groups that enhance the HDP's mobilization capacity in Bağcılar: first, the Kurdish "patriot" shopkeepers, tradesmen and businessmen (mostly, pettybourgeoisie), and second, the young-educated Kurdish professionals. While the former provides economic and financial resources, the latter provides the human resources to the party. Although Kurdish bourgeoise and pettybourgeoise are still very weak compared to their Turkish counterparts, their substantial financial donations and material contributions are very critical for the party. Besides, despite being very few in numbers, the young-educated Kurdish activists undertake the administrative burden of the HDP at the local level. I argue that the young educated Kurdish activists, who are more flexible and dynamic in the face of the rapidly changing political environment of the country, have begun to replace old-cadre party officials. Although the electoral base of the HDP predominantly consist of the poor and working-class, it is the small group of the Kurdish (upper and) middle class that have become the driving force behind the HDP at the local level. Kurdish bourgeoise, petty bourgeoise and young educated Kurdish professionals have recently transformed the dynamics of the Kurdish movement and the HDP. It is not a coincidence that there is an overlap between the emergence of small group of Kurdish middle-class and the HDP's transformation into the movement-party in the last decade. I argue that the upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments are able to act independent of clientelistic networks (of the AKP and other

Islamist actors) and make autonomous political decisions, and the HDP as a contentious movement-party necessitates this autonomous (educated and economically better-off) segments.

Moreover, I discussed that the extensive kinship networks (vis-à-vis the extended family organization) among the Kurdish communities become a tangible resource for the HDP. As a matter of fact, it is the Kurdish movement that have made use of kinship networks. There is a reciprocal relationship between the kinship and the party: one the one hand, the party utilize the already existing kinship networks for organization and mobilization, on the other hand, the kinship bonds and relationships are reproduced through the mediums of the party in the urban context. Furthermore, I showed that, along with the intellectual allies, the (relatively higher) educational attainment, media literacy and critical thinking (abilities) of the Kurdish voters are some facets of cultural resource/capital supporting the HDP at the local level. Last but not least, I underlined that even though there are some (explicit and implicit) tensions between the poor and the upwardly-mobile segments among the Kurdish populace, the HDP is still able to address and mobilize different classes.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of main findings

Despite same ethnic identity and similar background factors, why do some Kurds vote for the AKP, while others vote for the HDP? This was my initial puzzle in this dissertation. Instead of prevailing identity-based explanations, this thesis finds that there is a class-based differentiation explaining the voting behavior of Kurds living in Bağcılar and Istanbul.

First and foremost, I argued that class-based divisions significantly determine the Kurdish voting behavior. Although the majority of Kurdish voters in Istanbul are poor, the HDP's Kurdish voters are better-off in socioeconomic terms than the AKP's Kurdish voters. The logistic regression estimations showed that the class variables have statistically significant influence in the urban and district levels. As the income and education levels increase, Kurds are more likely to vote for the HDP and less likely vote for the AKP. As financial capability levels decrease, Kurds are more likely vote for the HDP and less likely vote for the AKP. An increase in religiosity increases the likelihood of the AKP voting among the Kurdish population. Comparatively speaking, Kurdish "women" and "elderly" are more likely to vote for the AKP, whereas Kurdish "men" and "youth" (younger adults) are more likely to vote for the HDP. Overall, these finding show that after controlling for age, gender, religiosity and household size, class factors significantly influence the Kurdish voting in Istanbul and in Bağcılar.

As discussed previously, the financial capability (FC) is especially significant in the context of this dissertation because it shows the self-declared welfare levels as

well as the perception of deprivation. Although Kurdish supporters of the AKP are poorer, they feel less discontent (or dissatisfaction) with their financial conditions. Kurdish supporters of the HDP have higher income, yet they feel more discontent (or dissatisfaction) with their financial conditions. This means that despite their better prospects of upward mobility, pro-HDP Kurds are not satisfied in financial terms. Since there is a strong positive correlation between the religiosity and the AKP voting, one can argue that religiosity brings "patience" and "resilience" in the face of material hardships; the higher religiosity of the pro-AKP Kurds explains to some extent their higher levels of contentment. However, the question remains unanswered for the pro-HDP Kurds. Regarding this contradiction, I argue that the case of pro-HDP Kurds, especially those upwardly-mobile segments, can be understood from a "relative deprivation" (RD) framework. The RD is not about the actual experience of deprivation, but the subjective evaluation of material conditions. Along with their experiences of injustice and discrimination in the past, their comparisons with the dominant ethnic group (Turks) and wealthier classes (middle-class and bourgeoisie) in present also contributed to their feeling of RD.

I investigated the dynamics behind the Kurdish political mobilizations on the ground. I found that the AKP and the HDP employ different strategies, resources, networks, and repertoires for mobilizing the Kurdish electorate. Based on the ethnographic data I gathered during my fieldwork in Bağcılar, I argue that the AKP is a clientelistic-machine-party that is able to satisfy both material and moral (subjective) needs, expectations and aspirations of the Kurdish poor, whereas the HDP is a contentious-movement-party that is able to represent and shape the grievances and RD of upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments.

7.1.1 The AKP's Kurdish mobilization in Bağcılar

As stated previously, the AKP's successful mobilization among the Kurdish poor cannot be understood through its disciplinary and coercive (neoliberal governmentality) techniques or basic assumptions of conventional electoral clientelism and vote-buying. It is necessary to look at how the AKP produces continuous consent on the ground. The party has massive grassroots organizations and locally-embedded broker networks. The party's brokers are always on the field and available for the local people. Indeed, there is only the AKP brokers (along the Islamic communities) on the ground that take care of them; no other political party or movement have established strong relationships with the poor in peripheral neighborhoods. The AKP inherited and developed the tradition of the pro-Islamist RP's grassroots activism (or "vernacular politics") in the poor peripheral districts of Istanbul (White, 2002; Doğan, 2016).

Besides material provisions, the brokers established long-term intimate relationships with the poor Kurdish voters. By looking from below, in the eyes of the Kurdish poor, it is the AKP's coethnic brokers in their own neighborhoods that try to solve all sorts of their problems, meet their needs, expectations and aspirations, and recognize their fragile subjectivities through *hâmîlik* (providing protection) and *abilik*/*ablalık* (brotherhood/sisterhood). The Kurdish brokers aim to produce a moral community and economy, and construct symbolic and affective universe for the Kurdish poor through the principles of Islamic solidarity, charity, benevolence and generosity – which are "root paradigms" of the Islamist movements in Turkey (Turner, 1974, cited in Mardin, 1989, p. 3).[192] The AKP brokers (especially female

[192] Turner defines the root paradigms as the "clusters of meaning which serve as cultural 'maps' for individuals; they enable persons to find a path in their own culture" (Mardin, 1989, p. 3). Mardin states that "*gaza*" and "*gazi*" are examples of root paradigms in Islamist movement. "*Tebliğ*", "*irşad*," "*rıza*," "*ihlas*," "*tevekkül*" are some other root paradigms mentioned by the AKP brokers in Bağcılar.

ones) in the field define their activism and mobilization endeavors with Islamic idioms, mainly "*tebliğ*". Taking this subjective dimension into consideration, AKP's linkages among the Kurdish poor can be properly understood as "relational clientelism" with both redistribution and recognition dimensions.

Despite some interest-seeking motivations, Kurdish male brokers of the party pay special attention to the civic activism and community services in line with the Islamic morality. Most of the Kurdish male brokers are self-employed, entrepreneurs and small businessmen. The Kurdish businessmen act as coethnic brokers of the party. They are organized under *hemşehri* associations, which are also significant mediums of clientelism in Bağcılar. With their "successful" entrepreneurship stories, the Kurdish businessmen-brokers are appealed to the poor Kurdish workers. They articulate and disseminate the neoliberal ethos of the party. In articulating their "success stories," their message is clear: if the poor Kurdish workers work hard enough and catch the right moments and opportunities, they would climb the social ladder one day and become middle- or upper-class citizens like themselves. While pursuing professional careers, the Kurdish male brokers provide financial support to the poor, needy, elderly and students; they regularly visit the associations and foundations, Quran schools and mosque communities. They deal with the various issues and problems of the poor. Their offices, shops and workspaces become informal party spaces, where hundreds of Kurdish poor and workers visit and ask for advice, or just have a small chat. Through their efforts, the Kurdish brokers prove that they care about the problems of poor. In the interviews, they often explained this care with reference to the Islamic moral principles.

Nevertheless, the AKP's Kurdish broker-women are much more active than the Kurdish broker-men in the field. It is the broker-women who identify the material

conditions of households in their neighborhoods. They are asked by the party to specify the urgent material needs of their neighbors, so that the municipality and private sector could provide social assistance. The most significant advantage of the AKP's broker-women is their channeling of (private) social assistance (and charity donations), which are indeed controlled by the municipality and the party officials in Bağcılar. As the public authorities do not have access to such detailed knowledge about poor dwellers, the broker-women provides a great leverage for the AKP's establishment of local machines. This condition shows that the broker-women are agents of "governmentality from below." Appadurai (2002) suggests that the politics of (local) knowledge based on informal censuses, "self-surveys" and "self-enumeration" – "the knowledge of exactly which individuals live where, how they make their livelihood, how long they have lived there, and so forth" – should be considered as the major strategy of "governmentality from below" (pp. 35-36). In addition, considering the fact that it is women instead of men who ask for social assistance in Turkey, this mechanism (i.e. the intermediation of the party women in social assistance provision) is critical for the reproduction of dominant patriarchal norms that the AKP aspires to for building an Islamic moral community.

The intimate relationships established between the AKP's broker-women and the Kurdish housewives over the Islamic norms have not been achieved by other political parties until now (Ark-Yıldırım, 2017). In mobilizing the Kurdish housewives, the party women pay special attention to the dominant Sunni-Islamic norms and captures the habitus of the religious-conservative housewives. They strictly visit the Kurdish housewives when their husbands are not at home. This gesture accords with the sharia rule ("*haremlik*"). The regular home visits of the AKP women do not necessarily have political purposes; they could meet with the

Kurdish housewives for reading Quran and *mawlid*, or the solidarity gatherings ("*gün yapmak*"). They organize informal gatherings for the Kurdish housewives in the holy days and nights. They regularly visit patients, elderly, pregnant women, mothers with newborns. Especially during the Ramadan, they try to visit all neighborhood dwellers and ask their well-being. Such visits serve for the purpose of Islamic solidarity and awaken the feeling of *ummah* in everyday life. The party women have established successful problem-solving networks at the neighborhood level. They are not only interested in material well-being of their neighbors but also address and take care of their moral issues – such as Islamic womanhood, marriage-based problems, children's education and psychology, etc. In their narratives the party's broker-women prioritize the Islamic moral principles, as most of the broker-women believe that conveying the party's message and helping the needy is a "holy cause."

Recently, the AKP initiated the *Gönül Bağı* (Love Bond) project in Bağcılar, which is the largest publicly sponsored civic initiative in Istanbul with more than 10,000 volunteers. The volunteers of the *Gönül Bağı* are mostly the AKP brokers and supporters. Besides the distribution of food packages, clothes and other basic supplies, *Gönül Bağı* volunteers take care of all sorts of problems of the poor, needy, pregnant, elderly and disabled and provide moral support to by visiting their homes. The soldier income, Life Support Project and Charity Bazaar are significant social projects of the municipality in reaching the poor electorate. Through such projects, the AKP has established extensive solidarity networks among the poor. The municipality offers free social services –basic supplies, healthcare, and home-cleaning– to the elderly. During the Ramadan, the municipality distribute thousands of food packages, shopping coupons and *iftar* tickets, which are indeed donated by private sector (the pro-AKP businessmen) to large extent. These projects also serve

for the establishment of political machine over and "governmentality from below" among the Kurdish poor, because as the AKP officials underlines, the Kurds of Bitlis are the largest recipients of such social (assistance) projects.

Nonetheless, as underlined several times, the AKP's political machine does not only entail the material benefits but also involve "politics of visibility" for the Kurdish poor (Appadurai, 2002, p. 38). In other words, the party's pro-poor strategies aim to produce the feeling of integration among the Kurdish poor. The clientelistic relationships vis-à-vis grassroots activism creates recognition, respect, protection, brotherhood and sisterhood in the long run. Considering the fact that the poor Kurdish migrants had been discriminated, stigmatized and excluded in everyday life by the old secular Istanbulites in the past, the AKP's recognition of the Kurdish poor and its offering of protection are influential among those segments. In this respect, the subjective dimension of AKP's relational clientelism that depends on the previous grievances (and resentment) of poor religious-conservative Kurdish migrants is very critical.

Moreover, Islamic communities and *tariqats* also play vital roles in the functioning of the AKP's machine politics on ground. With their material provisions as well as symbolic and affective appeals, these Islamic groups are intermediaries in the establishment of moral community and economy among the Kurdish poor at the local level, which facilitates the AKP's relational clientelism. I argued that Islamization process in Bağcılar (by means of Islamic communities and *tariqats*) has accelerated in the AKP period, because the municipality and the party authorities allow and promote the organization of Islamic communities and *tariqats* in the district. While the municipality opens a space for those Islamic groups, the party brokers interact and cooperate with the community and *tariqat* members. The Islamic

brotherhood and the feeling of belonging provided by these groups are influential on the Kurdish poor, as they provide cultural integration in Islamic ways.

There are hundreds of associations, foundations, schools, and Quran courses owned by Islamic communities and *tariqats* in the district. Those actors easily attract both the Kurdish poor by providing welfare services. In the free kindergartens and summer schools, for example, the communities and *tariqats* not only teach basics of Islam, reading Quran and practicing the *sunnah* of the Prophet, but also provide a safe environment, healthy food and drinks for the poor working-class children. They fill the vacuum (purposefully) left by the state in the field of education and social policies. With their own financial resources, these Islamic groups attempt to meet every need of the poor, provide social services and protection to them. Like the AKP itself, these Islamic groups address both redistribution and recognition issues.

In terms of framing, the AKP's machine politics are fueled by the antagonistic discourses at the local level. The party has been able to frame itself as the representative of the poor religious-conservative masses against the secular elites. One might interpret this as the resurrection of the century-old center-periphery cleavage. However, different from the previous period, the AKP has achieved this while representing the interests of capitalist class. The party has achieved garnering support of the poor while deteriorating their working conditions and livelihoods. The party brokers disseminate the anti-elitist anti-secularist discourses successfully in everyday life. This rhetoric has both identity and class dimensions – seculars vs. Muslims, poor vs. rich. The party galvanizes the deep-rooted resentment of the Kurdish poor against the Kemalist secular elites, which have arisen in the Turkish modernization process. Kurdish poor supporters of the AKP often think that their upward mobility have been hindered by the Kemalist-secular elites. They make sense

of their poverty not through ethnicity but religiosity. In this regard, anti-elitist anti-secularist rhetoric is a common denominator for Islamists and Kurds. Kurdish voters often see the AKP as the guarantor of religious life. They believe that they could not practice their belief under the secular governments. The religious identity becomes relevant as much as it represents and mediates the resentment of the poor voters in the case of the AKP. The party's Islamic frames gain ground as much as they resonate with the resentment of the poor against the secular elites.

Another influential frame is the cult of Erdoğan. Erdoğanism has become a significant in the late 2010s. The neoliberal development vis-à-vis the politics of service ("neoliberal servant-state") rhetoric of the AKP, which is in fact very influential on the Kurdish poor voters of the AKP in Bağcılar, faced a crisis during the Gezi uprising in 2013 and the failed coup attempt in 2016. However, the massive mobilization triggered by Erdoğan himself during the Democracy Watches in the major public squares of Istanbul prove the "symbolic and affective identification" of voters with Erdoğan (Küçük & Türkmen 2020, p. 5). Both the Turkish and Kurdish poor believe that Erdoğan is the representative of "ordinary people," and thereby they develop strong emotional ties with the leader. In this context, Erdoğan's designation of "external - internal enemies" has been attractive for some religious-conservative Kurdish voters. They believed that there is an international plot (especially by Jews and "infidels") against Erdoğan, Turkey and Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood. It is necessary to remark, that through antagonistic frames and othering discourses, Erdoğan has been able to consolidate electorate in the late 2010s.

Bağcılar's modernization and development by the pro-Islamist municipal governments are significant for the mobilization of the poor Kurdish dwellers. Before the 1990s, there were no pawed roads, sewage system or infrastructure in the

district. Kurdish poor remember the previous governments as negligent and inattentive – as if they were second-class citizens because they live in squatters and slums (*varoşlar*). Most Kurdish voters narrated their satisfaction with the improvements in healthcare, education and other social policies, and stated that their own welfare has improved in the last two decades with the AKP governments. Therefore, it is possible to say that the welfare populism is also significant factor.

7.1.2 The HDP's Kurdish mobilization in Bağcılar

I argue that, as a contentious movement party, HDP is both an expressive and constitutive medium of dissident Kurdish subjectivity. Although the party was established in 2012, there is a long mobilization history behind the HDP owing to the efforts of Kurdish movement since the early 1980s and a series of pro-Kurdish parties since the 1990s. However, despite its organic links with the Kurdish movement, HDP's transformation into a genuine movement party is quite a new phenomenon. Different from the previous pro-Kurdish parties, it has aimed for Turkeyification and claimed to represent not only Kurdish subalterns but all oppressed, marginalized and excluded groups in Turkey (HDP Party Program, 2012).

Despite its subaltern perspective, in comparative terms, it is the upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments that support the HDP in Bağcılar. The HDP's electorate primarily consist of the relatively better-off working-class and a small group of Kurdish middle-class. Although the Kurdish voters of the HDP have higher prospects for upward class mobility, they are not satisfied with their financial conditions. I argued that this contradiction can be understood through relative deprivation (RD) framework. Kurdish migrants' resentment intensified with the dispossession process after the forced migration, as they faced with capitalist inequalities and injustices in

the city. Therefore, the Kurdish of grievances and RD have become more evident and meaningful in the urban context. I argue that Kurdish feeling, perception and experience of RD have triggered their support for contentious politics. Those Kurds who feel stronger grievances and RD are more supportive of the HDP.

Nonetheless, it is necessary to underline that it is the HDP that reframes and reproduces the Kurdish grievances and RD, especially among those upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments. HDP contributes to the formation of dissident Kurdish subjectivities. In this context, the party space –the HDP headquarters and offices in Bağcılar– play a vital role. The party space function as counterhegemonic public or free space, where Kurdish dissidents can express their hard feelings, share their experiences, and meet and socialize with their fellows. Instead of going to cafes or coffeehouses, Kurdish voters prefer to spend their free time in the party offices and especially in the terrace of the HDP's headquarters. In this sense, the party space does not only serve for politicization but also for socialization. In the party space, Kurdish fellows from the same villages or towns recollect and narrate their "dark" memories, and in this way, they alleviate and heal their pain.[193] The party space has another significant function. The condolence (*taziye*) ceremonies of Kurdish insurgents as well as supporters of the Kurdish movement are performed in the big hall of the HDP's headquarters.

The Kurdish repertoires of resistance, which are performed in the party space and everyday life, are significant for the HDP's mobilization in Bağcılar. The party often makes use of the past symbols and moments of resistance and circulates the myths and historiography of Kurdish resistance. All around the walls of the party headquarters, there are hundreds of figures, posters and stickers depicting the figures

[193] Of course, these memories are not always painful, sometimes they tell each other good-old days of childhood, joyful moments of solidarity and resistance.

of Kurdish resistance. Prior to the HDP meetings, one-minute silence is performed to commemorate "Kurdish revolutionaries and martyrs." Almost in all speeches, the party officials recall and reflect upon the past figures. For example, the recollection of "Kurdish revolutionaries and martyrs" is a significant mobilization strategy. By this way, the party reframes and reproduces the deep-rooted Kurdish grievances.

Besides the party space, pro-Kurdish space-making in everyday life is significant. Some Kurdish activists indicate that Kurdish communities established their own "ghettos" in Bağcılar long ago. For example, Demirkapı neighborhood is a clear example of "Kurdish ghetto". Kurdish movement is well organized, and the Kurdish youth are very active in the Kurdish ghettos. In everyday language, the party officials and activists often refer to "our neighborhoods" vs. "other (fascist) neighborhoods." In addition, as markers of pro-Kurdish space-making, there are hundreds of cafes, coffeehouses, groceries, barbershops, real estate offices, etc. in the neighborhoods, where Kurdish dissidents hang around and socialize with each other.

Today, the most remarkable example of pro-Kurdish space-making in everyday life is the pro-Kurdish Shafi masjids, which are closely affiliated with the HDP, located in Bağcılar. Pro-HDP Kurds left praying in the Diyanet mosques long ago because they felt alienated in the face of the Turkish nationalist propaganda. The pro-Kurdish Shafi masjids provide "alternative" and "free spaces" for the pious Kurds. The traditional Kurdish imams, *mele*s, of these masjids perform prayers and sermons in Kurdish language and talk about social injustices, discrimination and peace issues. The Kurdish *mele*s of these masjids are organized under the DİAYDER and DİK in the 2010s. They provide heterodox interpretation of Islamic doctrines and history. As part of the "democratic Islam" paradigm, the HDP headquarters in Bağcılar hosted and promoted a series of meetings and activities of DİK. The *mele*s

and the pro-Kurdish masjids have established cultural affinities between the pious Kurds and the HDP. It is possible to say that these intermediaries started to be effective on the HDP's mobilization of, especially, the old-generation pious Kurds.

Most of the pro-HDP Kurds stated that they preferred to settle in Bağcılar in order to be close with their communities, relatives and colocals. Through spatial concentration, the Bitlisian Kurds have developed strong communal ties in Bağcılar. The familial, kinship and communal relationships are very influential on the formation of pro-Kurdish political identity among them. Kurdish kin members influence each other's political decisions in favor of the HDP. The spatial concentration of the Kurdish communities has a positive spillover effect in terms of political preferences. Despite the lessening of the importance of the kinship bonds among the second-generation Kurds with the intrusion of capitalist motivations, the communal solidarity is still important in the district.

Income pooling and debt relations are very frequent among Kurdish relatives. Extended family and kinship relationships are highly effective in establishing business and finding employment. It is possible to see the reflections of Kurdish kinship solidarity in the textile workshops, the wholesale vegetable market, the bazaar business and the minibus lines in Bağcılar. The "working-class entrepreneurialism" is quite common among the pro-HDP Kurds in the district (Birelma, 2019). It is possible to suggest that the spatial concentration, communal (or kinship) solidarity and the dissident political identity feed and reproduce each other.

Two Kurdish groups come to the forefront in terms of the resource mobilization of the HDP at the local level: Kurdish "patriot" shopkeepers, tradesmen and businessmen, and young educated Kurdish professional class. The former provides economic and financial resources, whereas the latter provides human

resources for the party in Bağcılar. There are hundreds of "patriot" businessmen and tradesmen, who generally own small- and medium-scale businesses in the district. Kurdish "patriot" businessmen and tradesmen play vital role: They make substantial monetary and in-kind donations to the party, offer their free office spaces, empty shops and stores for the party campaigns and activities, and if necessary, rent extra office spaces, lend their private cars for the party's operations, send free lunch and dinner to the party offices, prepare special meals for the *taziye* ceremonies, etc.

In addition, the human capital provided by the young-educated Kurdish professionals is incredibly significant for the HDP in Bağcılar. Although they are very few in numbers in Bağcılar, their multi-tasking activism is critical for the party's organization and mobilization. Most young activists have university degrees; they are either self-employed or pursue careers in the private sector. There are managers, engineers, architects, designers, web-developers, programmers, lawyers, sociologists, economists, etc. Young professional activists started to replace old-cadre executives in the last decade. For instance, the young activists working in the IT section are able to manage almost all operations through their computers and smartphones from the HDP headquarters in Bağcılar. They are highly effective during the campaigning and election periods. The party's young activists are multi-tasking and can respond to several issues at the same time; they are more adaptive to the ever-shifting challenges of the new era of information-based politics.

Besides the economic and human resources, kinship networks are significant organizational resource for HDP in Bağcılar. The party makes use of the traditional and kinship networks for political mobilization. Especially, the kinship groups from Bitlis are very influential in the HDP's organization in the district. However, it is necessary to state that there are reciprocal relationships between kinship and the

party: On the one hand, HDP utilizes already existing kinship bonds for mobilization, on the other hand, these kinship networks are reproduced through the mediums of the party – such as party meetings and activities – at the local level.

Last not but not least, intellectual and cultural capital are significant assets for the HDP in Bağcılar. Besides the higher educational attainment, the media literacy is remarkably high among the pro-HDP Kurds. The party members follow the political agenda of the country by reading pro-Kurdish newspapers every day and closely watching "oppositional" TV channels. Moreover, the party has many intellectual allies –democrat academics, writers, artists, socialists and feminists – at the local level. "The circulation of internal critical debate" is an important for the HDP's mobilization (Appadurai, 2002). The radical democratic, feminist and environmentalist articulations led to the dissemination of critical discourses among Kurdish voters. These factors do not only raise cultural capital but also contribute to ethnonational awareness and oppressed-class consciousness among voters.

7.2 Contributions and directions for future research

Until now, the AKP has been associated with the intermingling of Islamist ideology and neoliberalism, and various titles have been attached to explain the AKP's successful mobilization among the poor such as "social neoliberalism," "neoliberal populism," "partial welfarism," "nativist populism," "Islamist populism," (Atasoy, 2009; Bozkurt, 2013; Hadiz, 2014; Akçay, 2018; Gürsoy, 2019). Most of these studies look at the party's policies and populist logic from above. However, this dissertation argues that the party's uninterrupted hegemony cannot be understood through "top-down" perspectives, especially in the case of the Kurdish poor in Istanbul. I rather argue that AKP's success must be sought in its grassroots

mobilization strategies among the poor populations living in the urban peripheries. As the primary contribution to the existing literature, I showed that the funcitioning of the AKP's machine politics on the ground is of utmost significance. I found out that the AKP performs "relational clientelism" at the neighborhood level with its "locally-embedded brokers" and their "problem-solving networks" (Auyero, 2011; Nichter, 2018). As a matter of fact, the party has massive grassroots machines and extensive broker networks in all neighborhoods of Istanbul. Along with this finding, I showed that the AKP brokers are "repositories" or "walking encyclopedia" of knowledge (Zarazaga, 2014). Through their deep knowledge of demographics ("politics of knowledge") and strong presence in the neighborhoods ("politics of visibility"), the party brokers achieve "governmentality from below" among the Kurdish poor in Istanbul (Appadurai, 2002).

Nonetheless, I argue that the subjective dimension of the AKP's clientelism is as much significant as the material inducements in the case of Kurdish poor. To put it simply, AKP's relational clientelism and machine politics involve both redistributive and recognition appeals. Therefore, as the second contribution to the literature, I pointed out to the significance of the symbolic and affective universe constructed by the party's coethnic brokers among the Kurdish poor. The party brokers and intermediaries (*cemaat*s and *tariqat*s) are able to mobilize the poor Kurdish voters by addressing all sorts of issues, needs, expectations and aspirations, and constructing moral communities and economies among them through the Islamic principles of solidarity, charity, benevolence, brotherhood/sisterhood, *ummah* etc. (i.e. "the root paradigms") at the local level. Therefore, the brokers and intermediaries play pivotal roles in the functioning of AKP's machine politics.

The symbolic-subjective dimension is also critical because the poor religious-conservative Kurdish masses are resentful towards the secular-nationalist establishment and perceive that they are impoverished, neglected, discriminated and marginalized by the (Turkish) secular elites. Whether it is genuine or not, the feeling of intimacy and belonging is valuable, because for a long time (pious) Kurdish poor have felt that they were excluded by secular Turkish middle- and upper-classes. By recognizing and catalyzing this resenment, the AKP prefers to frame "Kurdish issue" not in terms of ethnicity but religiosity – through anti-secular anti-elitist discourses. In this sense, the AKP distorts the ethnicity dimension of the Kurdish issue.

Although I tried to map out the roles of the brokers and intermediaries, there is a need for further ethnographic studies on the subject. Especially, future research might consider examinining the relationships between the AKP's Kurdish female brokers and religious-conservative Kurdish housewives in poor peripheral neighborhoods. Besides, as previously argued, the AKP's clientelistic-machine politics have ample similarities with the Peronist "survival networks" at the poor neighborhoods in Argentina (Auyero, 2001). Therefore, one avenue for further research could involve a deeper exploration of the similarities and differences between these two cases. The comparative analysis of Erdoğanist and Peronist survival networks from a micro-perspective could provide fruitful line of research.

In the case of the Kurdish voting for the HDP, I established the relationship between the relative deprivation and support for contentious politics. As the third contribution to the literature, I showed the triggering effect of the Kurdish grievances and RD on their political preference. I underlined that the feeling of RD is an important issue for the upwardly-mobile Kurdish segments supporting the HDP. It is possible to attribute the Kurdish grievances and RD, first, to the experience of war,

violence and forced migration, and second, to capitalist inequalities and injustices in the urban context. Previous socialization and politicization within the Kurdish movement might also lead to the feeling of RD. However, comprehensive understanding of the Kurdish RD necessitates multidimensional analysis – with its social, psychological, and political aspects. I could not achieve the in-depth analysis of Kurdish RD because the boundaries of this study are limited to political preferences and mobilization.

As the fourth contribution, I showed the significance of the party spaces and the space-making in everyday life in terms of political mobilization. In the case of the HDP, I specified that the party space can be considered as "counter-hegemonic public" and/or "free" space, where dissident Kurds can articulate their grievances, recollect and heal their dark memories, socialize with each other, and reconstruct subjectivities. The party headquarters and offices at the local level are great sites for doing ethnographic research. The making of Kurdish "ghettos," kinship and communal solidarities in the neighborhoods, the mele organization and the pro-Kurdish Shafi masjids are also very significant subjects awaiting future researchers.

7.3 Broader theoretical implications

This study has important implications for the voting behavior literature. First and foremost, against the "new conventional wisdom" that declared the decline of class cleavages since the 1980s, I proved the significance of class-voting (Evans, 2000, 2017). Despite the dominance of identity politics in the literature, there is a growing interest in class politics especially with the arising discontent of the working-class (and precariat) after the global financial crisis in 2008 and exacerbating income and wealth inequalities in the last decades.

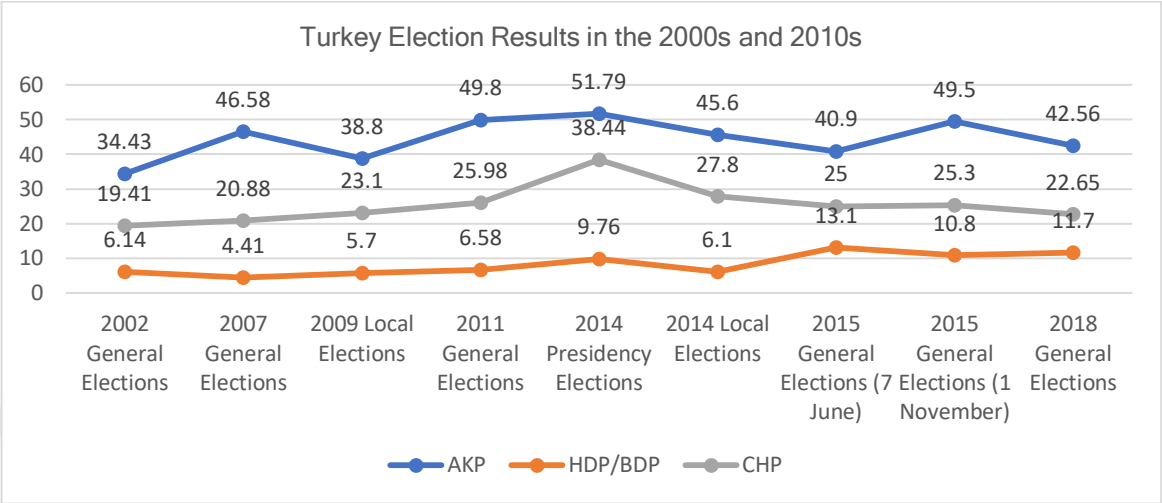
Nevertheless, lately, it becomes more apparent that what is missing in the literature on political preferences is not the class factors but lack of attention on the reciprocal relations between class clevages and party linkage mechanisms. This dissertation suggests that there is a two-way relationship between social and political, or social structure and political parties/preferences, and class analysis should be coupled with party's mobilization strategies on the ground. In other words, this study shows the necessity of linking the formation of class-based voting and the making of parties. I argue that the class cleavages cannot be taken as granteed, a priori, in the analysis, because political parties are significant in framing, constructing, reproducing and, sometimes, distorting class divisions among the electorate.

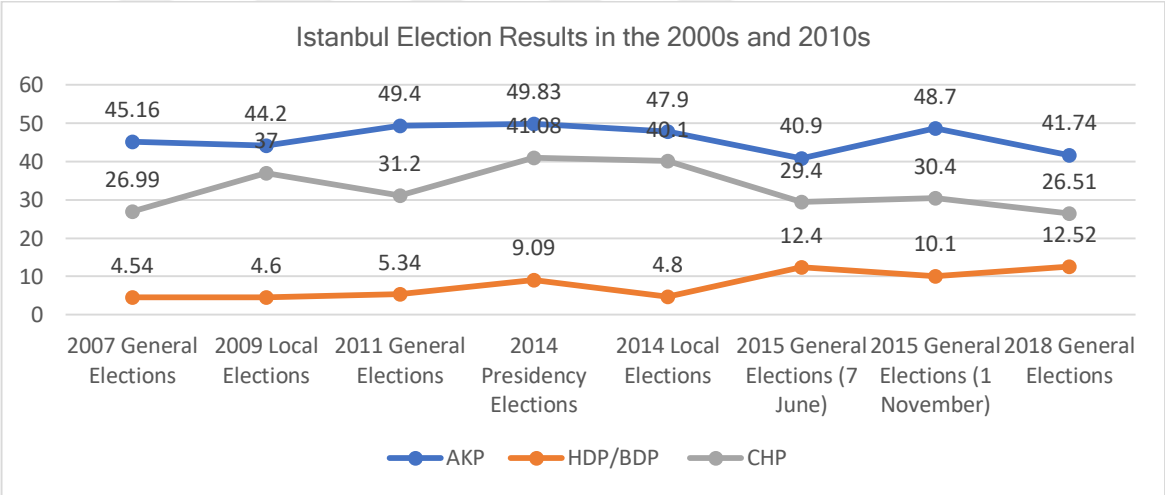
In this dissertation, I showed that class matters in voting behavior, but in order to better understand it, we need to look at the intermediation between parties and voters – such as the role of brokers. In addition, I demonstrated the signifiance of considering class along with ethnicity, religiosity, age and gender dimensions, which become intermediary and explanatory mechanisms in understanding the influence of class on political preferences.

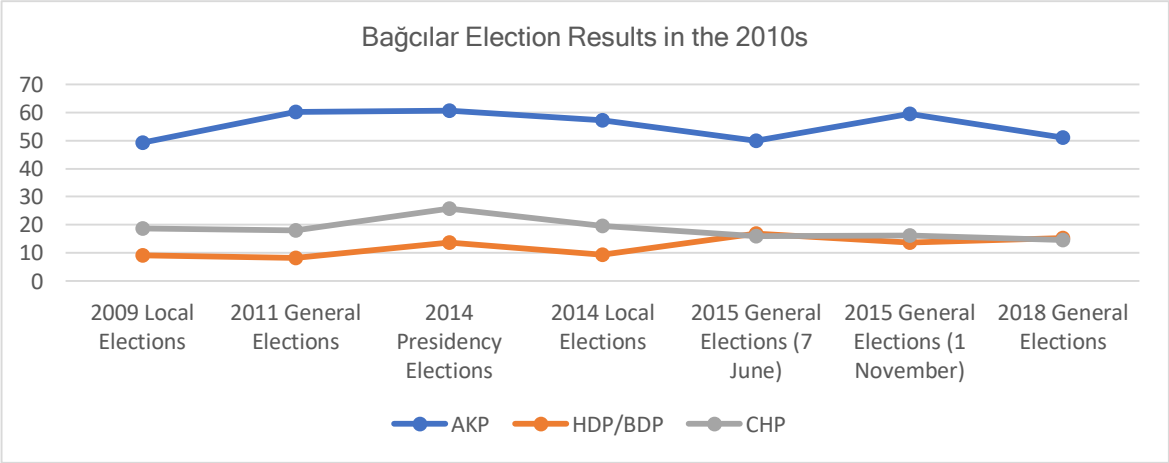
Last but not least, this dissertation offers that analyzing the objective standards (income and education) is not sufficient in exploring class factors in voting studies. It is neccesary to look at the voters's subjective experience of material/financial conditions. I specified that the feeling, perception and cognition of class (and socioeconomic status) are as much significant as the objective standards.

APPENDIX A

ELECTION RESULTS







Notes on election results:

- Data on election results are gathered from www.secim.habeler.com
- In the 2014 presidential elections, CHP and MHP jointly nominated a candidate – Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu – therefore, CHP's data-point in 2014 is higher than the actual voting share of the party.
- Both of the pro-Kurdish parties, HDP and BDP, participated in the 2014 local elections, Kurds voted for BDP in the Kurdish majority southeastern regions, while socialists together with Kurds living in metropolises voted for HDP in the West.
- In the 2011 general elections, Kurdish candidates independently entered the electoral competition to exceed the 10 percent election threshold. Still, after the election, they formed the BDP group in the parliament – so, the data-point of HDP-BDP in 2011 election is based on my own estimation.
- "YES" vote was represented together be AKP and MHP in the 2010 constitutional amendment referendum, while both CHP and HDP said "NO". Hence, it is not possible to differentiate AKP and HDP vote shares from the result, and therefore, the referendum election is omitted.
- The Kurdish party (DTP) was part of the leftist platform called Bin Umut Adayları (Thousand Hope Candidates) in the 2007 election but entered competition independently to overcome the 10 percent electoral threshold. For this election, I estimated the vote share of DTP through independent candidates: Kurdish MP number × Voting share of the independent candidates / total number of independent candidates. Besides, I regarded the voting rate of DTP's independent candidate Sabahat Tuncel as the data-point of the pro-Kurdish party in Istanbul for the same year.
- The results of the 2004 local elections were not included because first Kurds did not have an official party during this period, and second, it is very difficult to estimate Kurdish votes from the available data.
- Kurds entered the 2002 elections as the Democratic People's Party (DTP).
- The results of the 2017 presidential referendum were omitted because while AKP and MHP together represented "yes" vote (51,4 percent), CHP and HDP represented a "no" vote (48,6 percent).

APPENDIX B

BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

- 2002: the AKP became the leading party in the general elections with 34,4 percent of the votes.
- 2002-2007: AKP's constitutional and legislative steps towards democratization.
- 2005: Erdoğan's speech in Diyarbakır, "the Kurdish problem is my problem" ["This was the first time a prime minister recognized past wrongdoings of the state towards its Kurdish citizens and it marked a turning point in terms of the official approach to the Kurdish issue and Kurdish identity" (Grigoriadis and Dilek, 2018, 291).]
- 2007 - the general elections – the AKP substantially increased its vote share (46,6 percent).
- 2009: The AKP's declaration of "the Kurdish Opening" (*Kürt Açılımı*) process – the first state-run Kurdish-language television channel (TRT Şeş) was established, the departments of Kurdish language and literature were established in several public universities, the Kurdish villages were renamed into their originals; however, hundreds of the Kurdish politicians and activists of the DTP were arrested with accusation of "terrorism" in the same period.
- 2010: Introduction of "the National Unity and Brotherhood Project" (*Milli Birlik ve Kardeşlik Projesi*)
  ["AKP moved to a discourse on 'Islamic brotherhood' by promoting Sunni Muslim identity as a supra-identity for Turks and Kurds and situating Kurdish identity as more of a folkloric sub-identity" (Grigoriadis and Dilek, 2018, 291).]
- 2011 – the general elections – the AKP slightly increased its vote share – 49,8 percent
- 2013: Introduction of "the Resolution Process" (*Çözüm Süreci*) –the imprisoned leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, was included in the peace talks
- March 2015 – Erdoğan declared the "freezing" of the Resolution Process and argued publicly declared, "there is not a Kurdish problem at all." (Grigoriadis and Dilek, 2018, p. 293)
- June 2015 – the general election: AKP's vote share decreased to 40,8 percent, HDP's vote share increased to 13,1 percent
- June 2015 – the AKP deputy Burhan Kuzu declared that "the people voted for the chaos instead of the stability" on his Twitter account
- June 2015: The collapse of the Resolution Process – both the AKP and the HDP expressed their discontent from the process
- 7 July 2015 - 27 March 2016: the curfews, military operations and urban warfare in the Kurdish populates southeastern provinces: PKK digged entrenches and declared "self-autonomy" in some southeastern provinces, and the Turkish military started "clearing operations" in response; in "the entrench wars," as it is defined as by the Turkish media, 3.583 PKK militants, 355 Turkish soldiers/police, and 285 Kurdish civilians were dead.

- 2015 – 2018: Turkish nationalists' lynching of Kurdish people and violent attacks towards the HDP offices
- June 2015: the bombing of the HDP meeting (presumably by the ISIS) in Diyarbakır – 4 dead, 400 injured
- July 2015: the suicide bombing (probably by the ISIS) in Suruç towards the Turkish and Kurdish socialist students who attempt to deliver material support to Kobani Kurds – 33 dead 104 injured
- October 2015: the ISIS's bombing of *The Labor, Peace and Democracy Meeting* in the Ankara Terminal Station in which hundreds of DISK, KESK, TMOBB, TTB members and socialists participated – 103 dead 400 injured
- November 2015: the general elections: AKP's vote share increased to 49.5 percent, HDP's vote share decreased to 11,9 percent
- March 2016: The ISIS' bombing attack towards civilians in the main square (Kızılay) of Ankara – 37 dead 125 injured
- March 2016: The suicide bombing (presumably by the ISIS) towards civilians in Istiklal Street, Istanbul – 5 dead 39 injured
- April 2016 – The PKK's bombing attack towards civilians in Dürümlü, Sur, Diyarbakır – 16 dead 23 injured
- June 2016: The TAK's ("Kurdistan Freedom Hawks) bombing towards the police forces in Vezneciler, Istanbul – 11 dead 36 injured
- June 2016: The ISIS's suicide bombing and armed assault towards civilians in the Atatürk Airport, Istanbul – 42 dead, 238 injured
- August 2016 - The ISIS' bombing attack towards civilians in Gaziantep – 57 dead 66 injured
- October 2016: The PKK's bombing attack towards the Turkish military station in Şemdinli – 18 dead 27 injured
- December 2016 – The TAK's bombing attack towards civilians in Dolmabahçe, İstanbul – 46 dead 166 injured
- January 2017: The ISIS's armed assault towards civilians in the famous nightclub, Reina, in Istanbul – 39 dead 70 injured

APPENDIX C

SUMMARY STATISTICS

Summary Statistics for Kurdish samples of Bağcılar and Istanbul

Bağcılar	Observations	Mean	Standard Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Gender	603	1,510779	0,5002988	1	2
Age	517	1,531915	0,4994637	1	2
Education	612	3,46732	1,348058	1	7
Household Size	471	2,530786	0,8006694	1	4
Religiosity	606	2,978548	0,6411781	1	4
Incomewo	482	1955,411	1207,945	150	10.000
Subsistence	417	2,386091	1,001008	1	4
Lifestyle	487	2,271047	0,7511606	1	3
Auto-ownership	360	1,744444	0,4367801	1	2
Residence type	577	2,930676	0,402309	1	4
Economic class	283	2,091873	0,9023439	1	4
Istanbul	Observations	Mean	Standard Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Gender	5.254	1,515988	0,4997919	1	2
Age	4.441	1,557307	0,496761	1	2
Education	5.246	3,661456	1,410214	1	7
Household Size	4.179	2,344341	0,7546717	1	4
Religiosity	5.230	2,813767	0,7300098	1	4
Incomewo	4.088	2129,799	1449,816	100	10000
Subsistence	3.666	2,414075	0,9967798	1	4
Lifestyle	4.219	2,101446	0,7714963	1	3
Auto-ownership	3.201	1,728835	0,4446307	1	2
Residence type	4.713	2,853596	0,5495371	1	5
Economic class	2.323	2,287129	0,9732612	1	4

APPENDIX D

INSTRUMENTAL VARIABLE ESTIMATION: ISTANBUL

IV probit estimation for testing the endogeneity of the financial capability indicator (*subsist*) on the Istanbul sample,

```
. ivprobit hdpkurd incomewo relig (subsist = auto)

Fitting exogenous probit model

Iteration 0:   log likelihood = -1555.3162
Iteration 1:   log likelihood = -1392.6537
Iteration 2:   log likelihood = -1392.2682
Iteration 3:   log likelihood = -1392.2682

Fitting full model

Iteration 0:   log likelihood = -3265.7411
Iteration 1:   log likelihood = -3263.2508
Iteration 2:   log likelihood = -3263.0473
Iteration 3:   log likelihood = -3263.0473

Probit model with endogenous regressors         Number of obs     =      1,640
                                                Wald chi2(3)      =     200.80
Log likelihood = -3263.0473                     Prob > chi2       =     0.0000

------------------------------------------------------------------------------
             |      Coef.   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
     subsist |   .5217363   .2409071     2.17   0.030     .0495671    .9939055
    incomewo |   .0001033   .0000325     3.18   0.001     .0000396    .0001671
       relig |  -.5466323    .074742    -7.31   0.000     -.693124   -.4001406
       _cons |   .2217705   .8055744     0.28   0.783    -1.357126    1.800667
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
     /athrho |  -.2608031   .2655014    -0.98   0.326    -.7811763      .25957
    /lnsigma |  -.0462371   .0174608    -2.65   0.008    -.0804596   -.0120147
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
         rho |  -.2550466   .2482309                     -.6533814    .2538933
       sigma |   .9548155   .0166718                      .9226922    .9880572
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Instrumented:  subsist
Instruments:   incomewo relig auto
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Wald test of exogeneity (/athrho = 0): chi2(1) =     0.96 Prob > chi2 = 0.3260
```

For Wald test, the null hypothesis was no endogeneity. The Wald statistic turns out to be not significant. We cannot reject the null hypothesis of no endogeneity – in other words we can reject endogeneity.

APPENDIX E

INSTRUMENTAL VARIABLE ESTIMATION: BAĞCILAR

IV probit estimation for testing the endogeneity of the financial capability indicator (*subsist*) on the Bağcılar sample,

```
. ivprobit hdpkurd incomewo relig (subsist=auto)

Fitting exogenous probit model

Iteration 0:   log likelihood = -181.96875
Iteration 1:   log likelihood = -166.65953
Iteration 2:   log likelihood = -166.63622
Iteration 3:   log likelihood = -166.63622

Fitting full model

Iteration 0:   log likelihood = -360.95158
Iteration 1:   log likelihood = -360.52774
Iteration 2:   log likelihood = -359.65344
Iteration 3:   log likelihood = -359.63084
Iteration 4:   log likelihood = -359.63077
Iteration 5:   log likelihood = -359.63077

Probit model with endogenous regressors         Number of obs     =        185
                                                Wald chi2(3)      =      13.10
Log likelihood = -359.63077                     Prob > chi2       =     0.0044

------------------------------------------------------------------------------
             |      Coef.   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
     subsist |   .2369306   .4476995     0.53   0.597    -.6405443    1.114405
    incomewo |   .0001311   .0001021     1.28   0.199     -.000069    .0003312
       relig |  -.6046523   .1884235    -3.21   0.001    -.9739555   -.2353491
       _cons |   1.284442    1.09976     1.17   0.243    -.8710486    3.439932
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
     /athrho |     .06351   .4187262     0.15   0.879    -.7571782    .8841983
    /lnsigma |  -.0800532   .0519875    -1.54   0.124    -.1819469    .0218405
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
         rho |   .0634248   .4170418                     -.6394119    .7085163
       sigma |   .9230672    .047988                      .8336456    1.022081
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Instrumented:  subsist
Instruments:   incomewo relig auto
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Wald test of exogeneity (/athrho = 0): chi2(1) =     0.02 Prob > chi2 = 0.8794
```

APPENDIX F

SPECIAL REGRESSION ESTIMATION FOR ISTANBUL

```
. sspecialreg hdpkurd ageo, exog(incomewo relig) endog(subsist) iv(auto)

Kurtosis of special regressor ageo =    3.2185

3693 observations trimmed: max abs value of transformed variable =  4.33 sigma


Instrumental variables regression                     Number of obs =     1594
                                                      Wald chi2(3)  =    67.73
                                                      Prob > chi2   =   0.0000
                                                      Root MSE      =   46.478
```

hdpkurd	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
subsist	23.88478	9.363624	2.55	0.011	5.532411	42.23714
incomewo	.0041994	.0013075	3.21	0.001	.0016367	.0067622
relig	-9.647845	1.743894	-5.53	0.000	-13.06581	-6.229876
_cons	-39.5938	26.99131	-1.47	0.142	-92.49581	13.3082

```
Instrumented : subsist
Instruments:   incomewo relig auto

Marginal effects at the mean, average index function

             hdpkurd
    ageo   .00415605
 subsist   .09926622
incomewo   .00001745
   relig  -.04009688
   _cons  -.16455365
```

APPENDIX G

HAUSMAN TEST FOR ISTANBUL ESTIMATION

Hausman specification test "compares an estimatorb θ1 that is known to be consistent with an estimatorb θ2 that is efficient under the assumption being tested. The null hypothesis is that the estimator b θ2 is indeed an efficient (and consistent) estimator of the true parameters. If this is the case, there should be no systematic difference between the two estimators. If there exists a systematic difference in the estimates, you have reason to doubt the assumptions on which the efficient estimator is based" (STATA Manual 13). There is no systematic difference found in the model.

```
. logit hdpkurd subsist incomewo relig

Iteration 0:   log likelihood = -1555.3162
Iteration 1:   log likelihood = -1394.1482
Iteration 2:   log likelihood = -1393.3451
Iteration 3:   log likelihood = -1393.3445
Iteration 4:   log likelihood = -1393.3445

Logistic regression                               Number of obs     =      2,253
                                                  LR chi2(3)        =     323.94
                                                  Prob > chi2       =     0.0000
Log likelihood = -1393.3445                       Pseudo R2         =     0.1041

------------------------------------------------------------------------------
     hdpkurd |      Coef.   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
     subsist |   .4431397   .0484008     9.16   0.000     .3482759    .5380036
    incomewo |   .0001564   .0000341     4.58   0.000     .0000895    .0002234
       relig |  -.9364232   .0717105   -13.06   0.000    -1.076973   -.7958733
       _cons |   1.468616   .2573667     5.71   0.000     .9641868    1.973046
------------------------------------------------------------------------------

. estimates store allcats
```

```
. logit hdpkurd subsist incomewo relig if subsist !="1":subsist
(value label dereference "1":subsist not found)
(value label dereference "1":subsist not found)

Iteration 0:   log likelihood = -1555.3162
Iteration 1:   log likelihood = -1394.1482
Iteration 2:   log likelihood = -1393.3451
Iteration 3:   log likelihood = -1393.3445
Iteration 4:   log likelihood = -1393.3445

Logistic regression                               Number of obs     =      2,253
                                                  LR chi2(3)        =     323.94
                                                  Prob > chi2       =     0.0000
Log likelihood = -1393.3445                       Pseudo R2         =     0.1041
```

hdpkurd	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
subsist	.4431397	.0484008	9.16	0.000	.3482759	.5380036
incomewo	.0001564	.0000341	4.58	0.000	.0000895	.0002234
relig	-.9364232	.0717105	-13.06	0.000	-1.076973	-.7958733
_cons	1.468616	.2573667	5.71	0.000	.9641868	1.973046

```
. hausman . allcats, alleqs constant

Note: the rank of the differenced variance matrix (0) does not equal the number of coefficients being tested (4); be sure this is
        what you expect, or there may be problems computing the test.  Examine the output of your estimators for anything
        unexpected and possibly consider scaling your variables so that the coefficients are on a similar scale.
```

	Coefficients (b) .	(B) allcats	(b-B) Difference	sqrt(diag(V_b-V_B)) S.E.
subsist	.4431397	.4431397	0	0
incomewo	.0001564	.0001564	0	0
relig	-.9364232	-.9364232	0	0
_cons	1.468616	1.468616	0	0

```
                     b = consistent under Ho and Ha; obtained from logit
          B = inconsistent under Ha, efficient under Ho; obtained from logit

   Test:  Ho:  difference in coefficients not systematic

                 chi2(0) = (b-B)'[(V_b-V_B)^(-1)](b-B)
                         =       0.00
               Prob>chi2 =           .
               (V_b-V_B is not positive definite)

.
```

APPENDIX H

ORIGINAL REGRESSION MODEL WITH TIME DUMMY

hdpkurd		hdpkurd	
incomewo	0.000124**	1.subsist	0
	(0.0000452)		(.)
		2.subsist	1.271***
1.agegroup	0		(0.190)
	(.)	3.subsist	1.413***
2.agegroup	-0.391**		(0.229)
	(0.131)	4.subsist	1.770***
			(0.211)
1.gender	0		
	(.)	2012 - 1	0
2.gender	0.538***		(.)
	(0.120)	2013 - 2	-0.173
			(0.326)
1.housepop	0	2014 - 3	0.261
	(.)		(0.252)
2.housepop	0.176	2015 - 4	1.065***
	(0.219)		(0.245)
3.housepop	0.462*		
	(0.234)	_cons	1.219
4.housepop	1.010***		(0.680)
	(0.272)		
		N	1642
1.relig	0		
	(.)		
2.relig	-2.521***		
	(0.603)		
3.relig	-3.667***		
	(0.605)		
4.relig	-4.246***		
	(0.619)		

Standard errors in parentheses

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

APPENDIX I

POSTERS FROM THE BAĞCILAR SQUARE

Fig. 34 Posters of Islamic talks in the Bağcılar's main squre

Fig. 35 Poster promoting urban transformation in Bağcılar

APPENDIX J

EXAMPLES OF *APARTKONDU*

Fig. 36 An *apartkondu* example (1)

As it is seen in this example, the construction of upper-floors is not always consistent the lower-floors at all because of its unplanned and spontaneous nature.

Fig. 37 An *apartkondu* example (2)

In this example, the attic floor and roof added to the building later.

APPENDIX K

REGRESSION ON THE ISTANBUL KURDISH SAMPLE: 2010-2018

	Model 1 hdpkurd	Model 2 hdpkurd	Model 3 hdpkurd	Model 4 hdpkurd	Model 5 hdpkurd
1b.gender (male)					
2.gender (female)	0.515*** (0.078)	0.535*** (0.078)	0.415*** (0.081)	0.440*** (0.082)	0.486*** (0.091)
1b.age (youth)					
2.age (older)	-0.429*** (0.078)	-0.419*** (0.078)	-0.272*** (0.081)	-0.293*** (0.083)	-0.316*** (0.092)
house.income	0.164*** (0.033)			0.113*** (0.036)	0.176*** (0.040)
house.income.oe		0.001*** (0.000)			
education			0.195*** (0.031)		
financial.capability					0.513*** (0.049)
religiosity				-1.022*** (0.064)	-0.978*** (0.070)
_cons	-0.754*** (0.160)	-0.191** (0.084)	-0.758*** (0.133)	2.384*** (0.256)	0.777** (0.315)
Obs.	2828	2828	2828	2828	2416
Pseudo R^2	0.026	0.022	0.030	0.107	0.138

Standard errors are in parenthesis
*** *p < 0.01*, ** *p < 0.05*, * *p < 0.1*

Regression estimation on the Kurdish sample of Istanbul between 2010 and 2018 - observations above 5000 TL are dropped (only “working-class”)

hdpkurd	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
housincomoe	0.000	0.000	4.39	0.000	0.000	0.000	***
age	-0.317	0.097	-3.27	0.001	-0.507	-0.127	***
relig	-0.914	0.074	-12.43	0.000	-1.058	-0.770	***
financial capable	0.493	0.051	9.61	0.000	0.393	0.594	***
1b.gender	0.000	.	.	.	.	.	
2.gender	0.524	0.096	5.46	0.000	0.335	0.712	***
Constant	1.238	0.303	4.08	0.000	0.643	1.832	***

*** *p < 0.01*, ** *p < 0.05*, * *p < 0.1*

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